NETWORKING WITH ORGANIZATIONS SERVING PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

A Literacy Link South Central Community Development Project

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With the Assistance of Community Round Tables,
Focus Groups, and Interviews in
Brant, Elgin, Haldimand, Middlesex, Norfolk
and Oxford , and the
Project Advisory Group
London, ON
July 18, 2002**

Acknowledgments

More than ten years ago, the late Robert Gary ("Bob") Bird, as Chair of the Elgin Council for Adult Education reminded the Council to "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."[1] Bob dedicated many years of his life to adult education, believed deeply in its principles, and had a special place in his heart for Special Education. It is to these values that we dedicate this project.

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[1] A Quote from Anthropologist Margaret Mead.

Using the Community Development Model

Community Development helps build capacity in communities by addressing issues and taking advantage of opportunities for training and change at the community level.

--NWT Literacy Council

Building individual capacity means having a process that enables individuals to increase access to the information, skills, and networks that support their participation in communities and organizations.

--Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse, "More than Bricks and Mortar...," July 2002.

Partnership philosophy in the non-profit sector is simple. We can go further together than we can alone. Through pooling our resources, working at economies of scale, sharing information, and cross-referring clients, community partners are equipped to reach more clients, more efficiently, at lower cost.

--The Network to Learning Project, London, ON

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A Project Review

Over the past year, Literacy Link South Central (LLSC) initiated a number of projects designed to address community literacy needs and issues. During that time, LLSC was approached by programs serving persons with Special Needs, and asked for assistance in connecting to the literacy field, accessing literacy resources, and reducing the segregation and isolation currently being experienced by some programs.

At the same time, literacy service providers funded by the Literacy and Basic Skills Branch of the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU) also asked LLSC to explore what literacy services exist in the various urban and rural communities located in the six-county area served by the Network.

As a Network of literacy workers, learners, programs, and business partners, LLSC saw an opportunity to build community capacity both within the Special Needs sector and in the broader communities by designing a *community development* project. This Project would not only identify community services and best practices but also identify gaps in service and look at ways to potentially bridge the gaps.

The agency's "Networking with Organizations Serving Persons With Special Needs" Project received funding last fall from the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) and MTCU to explore whether Special Needs organizations in a six-county area have an on-going stake in literacy.

This document is the Final Project Report, providing information that we hope will be useful to service providers, community partners, and funders. While many of the resource documents used in the Project and described in this report describe findings or discuss training options for persons with developmental disabilities, we would like readers to understand that we believe that many of these documents may be valuable when working with people who have other disabilities. Our best efforts were made to ensure that, at the time of printing, the contact information included in this report was accurate and up to date.

An Overview of Literacy

Adult literacy is a serious issue in Ontario. The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) found that 20 per cent of adults in the province do not have basic literacy skills. An additional 24 per cent would benefit from literacy upgrading.

Literacy skills are needed every day – at work, at home, at school, and in the community. These skills help people to take part in further education and training, as well as to find and keep jobs. They form the essential foundation upon which people can build additional skills, and they help people become more independent.

Research data tells us that the literacy needs of people with disabilities have not been met. Despite the extraordinary efforts of some literacy practitioners and disability groups across the country, the literacy picture for people with disabilities has remained relatively unchanged over the past decade.

There are hundreds, perhaps thousands of literacy programs in Canada. A literature review has revealed that there are too few that serve the needs of people with disabilities. The legacy of a segregated education system and few literacy program options for people with disabilities in Canada is lower educational attainment, poor literacy skills and high unemployment.

Because of generally low literacy skills, many people with disabilities are not in a position to take advantage of the opportunities presented by a changing world and its more complex economy.

IALS demonstrated that approximately 44 per cent of Canadians function at the lowest two of five literacy levels.[1] Subsequent reports show us that proportionately more people with disabilities function at the lowest literacy levels.[2]

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1 "Reading the Future, A Portrait of Literacy in Canada," 1996.
2 "Literacy and Disability," December 2000, Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee, Joel Macht. The Advisory Committee is a tri-partite committee made up of representatives from Human Resources Development Canada, (HRDC), the British Columbia provincial government and the disability community.

One report shows that between 50 and 77 per cent of people with disabilities function at the lowest two literacy levels.(3) The IALS data also demonstrated relationships between literacy and education, employment, income, and disability. The need to improve the generally low literacy levels among people with disabilities is exacerbated by the increasing importance of literacy skills in the workplace of the new economy.

The most current data on persons with disabilities is included in the 1991 Health and Limitation Survey (HALS). In 1999, Income Security and Social Development, Applied Research Branch at HRDC began developmental work on a new survey about persons with disabilities in collaboration with Statistics Canada. The first step was to consult with the community of data users to identify their information needs. The findings from this broad- based consultation are reported in the document entitled Consultation on Disability Surveys published in March 2000. In the Employment Section, some of the most frequent requests concerned education, training, and literacy.

Most respondents reported that having information about the working age population in the HALS Survey was most important, but that having information about children, seniors, and the institutional population was equally important to many groups and government departments. Provincial level data was requested for most respondents. Of the 292 consultation packages mailed, there were 126 responses received. The findings from the extensive and ongoing consultation process were used by HRDC and Statistics Canada to develop a new survey. The survey has collected information on: rates of disability; types of disabilities; severity and access and barriers to full participation in the home, at school, in the labour market, and in community and social activities. In addition, data was also collected on the use of disability supports, unmet needs and costs.

Both questionnaires went through the final stages of completion for pilot testing in the fall of 2000. The post-census survey was conducted in the fall of 2001. The results will be available early in 2003.(4)

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3 Kapsalis, 1999.
4 Publications Office, Applied Research Branch, Strategic Policy, HRDC.

BUILDING THE MODEL

Developing a Community Development Model using Participatory Research, Round Table Discussions, Focus Groups and Individual Interviews.

Creating community infrastructure to gather and share information and initiate community planning efforts, focused on literacy.

Community Capacity-Building Model Development

Community Development practices and principles played an integral role in the development of the Special Needs Networking Project.

Key principles of community development used included:

- *Building community-capacity in communities by addressing issues and taking advantage of opportunities for training and change at the community level.*

Key issues addressed during the course of the project included lack of information and resource sharing community infra-structure within the Special Needs sector contributing to a sense of isolation, particularly in rural communities.

The Project used the term community infrastructure as a way of describing the networks and linkages necessary to build and maintain such things as a strong service delivery network of Special Needs service providers.

- *Using a participatory process of developing a shared vision, leadership, resources, and skills with communities and strengthening linkages, networks, and collective process.*

Initial and on-going research and community consultation not only created a body of participatory research but also initiated the development of community infrastructure as a means to continue community planning efforts and maintain momentum for these activities over time.

- Building individual capacity by having a process that enables individuals to increase access to the information, skills, and networks that support their participation in communities and organizations, through community outreach, linkages.

Outreach activities initiated during the Project to address issues and initiate planning included:

1. Facilitating community round tables or focus groups.
2. Gathering resources such as curriculum materials, training manuals, policies and procedures, or community service information directories

or brochures, to be offered to the community through access to an enhanced LLSC Community Resource Library, Special Needs Section.
3. Continuing to pursue an open consultation process through discovery of additional organizational linkages.
4. Promoting activities through presentations to other community groups, councils, committees, or networks.

- *The often-times missing link: community outreach support.*

A significant barrier exists to the development of long-term networks: the lack of community outreach. Such activities are often spoken about as the purist form of social work. Many Canadian government services, at both provincial and federal levels have supported a highly dispersed workforce to facilitate and support local activities. Long seen as a pro-active way to enhance both service delivery programming and over-all community capacity, community outreach efforts have been severely challenged over the last ten years.

The last decade saw most government services centralized, regionalized, or providing primary linkages to local communities through long distance communication and computer-aided technology. At the same time, many community-based services faced increased workloads and decreased funding. Special Needs agencies, like others, had little or no time to devote to client outreach efforts, increase professional development, or to build alliances. A service delivery environment in varying degrees of isolation has had an even more serious impact on Special Needs groups and at times on persons with disabilities as well.

A group that would benefit greatly from working together to share information and resources, explore professional development opportunities, and create innovative partnership programs to address issues and gaps in service, was left without the process to come together on a regular basis. Larger communities like London did however have the resources and the key leadership in place to begin various networking and information-sharing efforts.

In mid-2002, groups like Network to Learning, Partners in Employment, and Partners in Leisure are at opportune points, when members want to approach additional partners, to look at new ways to share information, and how to enhance resources.

The timing was right for a community development project like LLSC's Networking Project. It could not only provide a number of ways to come together to discuss literacy-focused issues, but also provided that missing

element, a paid community development specialist to facilitate and document community process.

The Project provided a number of important services:

1. Gathering literacy and disability research material from both an Internet and literature review, through linkages to a number of community, provincial, and national resource libraries. Key contacts included Literacy Link South Central; the Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford Local Training Board; and other materials provided by London's Partners in Leisure and Partners in Employment, the National Adult Literacy Database, the National Literacy Secretariat; and the provincial AlphaPlus lending library.
2. Compiling and sharing lists of potential consultation participants with the emerging group and other community partners;
3. Coordinating varied methods to bring these organizations together, including community round tables and small group or committee discussions; and individual interviews;
4. Facilitating the work of a Project Community Advisory Group or meeting with Community Committees to validate key research findings, support additional Project activities; and further facilitate the dissemination of information throughout the community; and
5. Developing Workshop reports, information bulletins, and resource documents, to sustain, document, and focus Project momentum and learnings.

Notable Research Documents and Recommendations

Research literature located during the Project is available as part of LLSC's resource library. The material includes various research studies, labour market analyses, Project Reports, and studies. In synthesizing materials, for discussions either with the advisory group or the larger community round tables, or as material for the group's future use, the following documents were considered "key". Their recommendations are worth noting here. The full documents are included in the Resource Library.

"Literacy and Disability": A Report by British Columbia's Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee

"Literacy and Disability" concluded with the following recommendations:

- Stakeholders should articulate a goal to have all literacy programs in the province be fully accessible and inclusive.

- People with disabilities who are participants or potential participants in literacy programs should be consulted to determine their needs.

- The business community should be consulted to provide direction to literacy training relating to specific employment sectors.

- Literacy coalitions…should be involved at the social policy level in the province.

- Linkages between disability groups and literacy groups should be established at the program level.

- Literacy programs should ensure that their volunteers are fully aware of and trained to deal with issues presented by students with disabilities.

- Disability organizations should make an effort to train their own literacy volunteers.

- A credential system should be developed for literacy instructors, especially volunteers, that recognizes practitioners working in the various areas of disabilities.

- Efforts should be made to increase the use of computers in adult literacy programs.

- A comprehensive directory of all disability-related literacy programs should be compiled.

- A Best Practices inventory of literacy programs for people with disabilities should be developed.

- To become more inclusive, literacy programs should make efforts to become more flexible, in time lines, and student expectations to allow for the inclusion of people with disabilities.

- All literacy students in all literacy programs should be screened for possible learning difficulties including learning disabilities and hearing or visual disabilities.

The "**Pan Canadian Study on Literacy Issues for Adults with Significant Physical Disabilities**," (Neil Squire Foundation, 1999) This study found that the majority of programs in every province identified the need for training and support in several areas:

- How to make their programs more accessible,

- Disability awareness,

- Technical aids and assistive devices

- Services and programs who can assess learners' access needs and services who can recommend appropriate equipment and provide training,

- Educational tools

"Literacy and Labels" (The Roeher Institute)

A report published by The Roeher Institute, a Canadian national organization for the study of public policy affecting people with intellectual disabilities, made recommendations to improve the literacy opportunities for people with disabilities in Canada. *"Literacy and Labels"* is an analysis of Canada's literacy policies as they relate to individuals with intellectual disabilities. The report made recommendations designed to improve these policies in the following areas:

- Policy development,

- Documentation of Best Practices,

- Materials Development

- Outreach,

- Linkages,

- Program evaluation

"The Literacy Book: Options for Teaching Literacy to People with Disabilities" **Centre for Independent Living in Toronto, Inc., 1992**

The book mentions that the *"The Accessibility of Literacy Upgrading in the Community for Adults with Disabilities"* (1988) included seven recommendations:

1. Strategies which address support for the needs associated with literacy tutoring for a range of people with disabilities must be developed.
2. Programs responsible for the delivery of ABL tutoring must include Disability
3. Awareness as a component in orientation and training/awareness sessions.
4. Programs responsible for the delivery of ABL tutoring must start to network with information brokerages which provide assistance to the disabled population. Programs responsible for the delivery of ABL tutoring must have information on, and access to, Communication-Assisting Devices (CADs).
5. Programs responsible for the delivery of ABL tutoring must begin to factor in accessibility costs as a standard item.
6. Programs responsible for the delivery of ABL tutoring must begin to conduct literacy outreach to adults living in institutions.
7. A directory of literacy programs must include status of accessibility.

According to *"The Literacy Book…"* a follow up report in 1990, *"Literacy Link Directory and Report,"* was a survey of adult basic literacy programs in Metropolitan Toronto, looking at accessibility and persons with disabilities. It was an effort to address the consumers' stated needs of information brokerage for literacy services as well as Recommendation #7 (above).

"The Literacy Link" report brought out four more recommendations:

1. That research in all areas of literacy and persons with disabilities be continued by interested organizations, especially Independent-Living Centres and other community-based groups of persons with disabilities;
2. That those groups interested in literacy and the needs of learners with disabilities work in cooperation with their local literacy umbrella organizations in order to continue to raise the awareness of literacy practitioners, to increase the knowledge of general literacy issues, among interested community groups, and to encourage and support learners with disabilities enrolled in, or wishing to enroll in, adult basic literacy programs of their choice;
3. That literacy practitioners should have accurate information on the needs and potential of learners with disabilities, especially given the attitudinal barriers which are still faced by disabled learners (this information could be provided in the form of a manual or a handbook);
4. That funding for accessibility from the Ontario Ministry of Education must continue in order for persons with disabilities to exercise their right to access the literacy programs of their choice in the community.

Supplementary Tutor Handbook, (Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres)

An extensive literature review and primary research lead the Association, which serves consumers with developmental disabilities, to identify four keys to success for improving the literacy of people with developmental disabilities, as described in their *"Supplementary Tutor Handbook"*:

- Tutor qualities, to ensure successful learning relationships,

- Written materials

- Support and outreach

- Successful Programs, identifying the common features of best practices.

"Literacy in Motion: A Guide to Inclusive Literacy Education" (The Roeher Institute)

The guide revealed a number of key factors determining a program's ability to serve people with intellectual disabilities. These include:

- Strong leadership

- Supportive Instructors and Tutors

- Inclusive Eligibility Criteria and Assessments

- Individualized Method of Instruction and Use of Resources

- Provision of Supports to Increase Accessibility

- Opportunities for Tutor Training and Tutor Support

- Flexible Approaches to Evaluation

- Outreach

Successful instructional methods in teaching reading, writing, and numeracy to help people with intellectual disabilities achieve their learning goals include:

- Language experience writing

- Photo stories about a person's job or volunteer work

- Stories and other reading material on topics compatible with a student's interest.

- Building a basic vocabulary on flash cards

- Assisting or paired reading from accessible books and taped books

- Encouraging writing (independent writing, keeping a journal).
- Computer-assisted literacy

- Using materials appropriate for learners' goals

- Options for instructions, individually or in groups.

- Open approach to curriculum.

Inclusive programs do exist, that work towards including people with disabilities into mainstream literacy education programs. The Speech Assisted Reading and Writing (SARAW) program is an example of where the transition from a specialized literacy program to a fully inclusive program can succeed.

The SARAW program is a talking computer program primarily designed to teach basic reading and writing skills to adults with severe physical disabilities who are non-verbal.[5]

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5 For more information: http://www.neilsquire.ca/prod/sarawsam.htm

Adults with Developmental Disabilities

Research conducted throughout the course of the Project located the following key resource documents:

"Building Bridges for Adults with a Developmental Disability"
© Tri-County Literacy Network August 25, 2000

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The Tri-County Literacy Network's *"Building Bridges for Adults with a Developmental Disability"* Project developed focus groups of representatives from the literacy field and the developmental disabilities field to exchange information and educate each other. The project was also designed to provide a workshop based on the Literacy Preparation Project for Adults with Developmental Disabilities.

The Project not only provided the Networking Project with a well-documented and designed community outreach process but also detailed a way to move from Issues to Action Planning in group settings with community agencies.

Templates developed by Tri-County during the course of its Project were also used in the final community roundtable in London. Samples of these original templates are found in the LLSC Resource Library.

"Building Bridges" proposed the development of a specific action plan to address concerns expressed during community consultations and focus groups. The Project was designed as a "model for other regions to use when addressing the issues and concerns of practitioners working with the literacy needs of persons with developmental disabilities." The Project's Final Report indicates that "the potential exists for a mutually beneficial exchange of information and training between those who have the training and expertise in supporting people with (developmental) disabilities, and those whose expertise is delivering literacy training.

Training Needed:
The Project goes on to suggest the training needed. The report gave several examples of training: "A workshop on effectively dealing with behavioural issues would be of benefit to literacy workers, as much as a workshop on teaching reading would be of benefit to developmental support workers." An initiative begun last year saw the inclusion of a literacy component within the framework of the Developmental Services Worker program at St. Clair College.

"Students graduating from this program directly support learners with developmental disabilities. Having this information when they begin their careers should result in increased awareness of the importance of literacy, in promoting both individual empowerment and community inclusion."

The feasibility of offering a general orientation to literacy training course through the Continuing Education department at St. Clair College was to be explored once the DSW component was implemented and evaluated.

Volunteer Sharing:
The report "suggested that the concern that literacy volunteers are not prepared to work with adults who have a (developmental) disability could be easily addressed by simply providing literacy tutor training to volunteers within the support agency. The same volunteer could be used by both sectors. This volunteer-sharing idea was met with a positive response."

Recommendations for further activity suggested by this Project include:

- "To explore with Colleges at the Provincial level, the possibility of incorporating a literacy component within the core competencies of the Developmental Services Worker, and Social Service Worker programs. This would ensure that graduates of these programs enter the work force with the knowledge and skills to support clients with both pre-literacy and literacy skills.

- That agencies supporting people with developmental disabilities and literacy programs work together to share volunteers, provide cross-training and follow up support.

- That agencies supporting people with developmental disabilities and literacy programs share relevant common training opportunities with one another.

- That agencies share relevant printed resources.

- That an annual event of shared interest to both sectors be planned and carried out.

- That local Literacy Service Planning groups look at some of the ongoing questions that have been posed by the project, and continue to consult with stakeholders in an effort to examine the suitability of current programs, identify gaps, needs, and recommended improvements."

Resource Sharing:
"Building Bridges" notes that "while resource sharing was on the minds of most front-line staff, it was a goal only sporadically attained. With the numerous services available throughout (the region) and the continuous transition and turnover of staff, establishing a consistent and dependable sharing of resources is at best laborious."

Electronic Methods:
The document goes on to say that "it appears that technology and electronic media are underutilized sources of resource information. The wealth of knowledge currently available is both overwhelmingly rich and diverse. Existing discussion groups available through the AlphaPlus and the National Adult Literacy Database websites cover various topics of interest and represent another avenue to explore when seeking solutions or a new perspective." Internet resources suggested include http://www.alphaplus.ca,

and such search engines as Yahoo, Lycos, and Northern Lights."

Examples of Building Partnerships:
"Building Bridges" gives a number of examples of partnerships initiated and continuing to develop:

- "Exploring the use of common volunteers and volunteer training.

- Initiating a literacy component in the area College Developmental Services Worker program.

- Where appropriate, exchanging training and educational opportunities between practitioners of literacy and advocates for the (developmentally) disabled.

- Facilitating a relationship with the College staff training and development committee.

- Better use by both sectors of existing electronic technology (e-mail and websites)."

Pre-literacy, literacy, and skills maintenance training services:

" *'Building Bridges'* also notes that some adults with (developmental) disabilities were in need of pre-literacy skills prior to entering a formal literacy program, others only required ongoing support to maintain previously acquire literacy skills. Formal literacy programs may not be the appropriate venue for skill maintenance.

Regardless of who delivers the services required, any solution must be flexible, innovative, financially responsible, and inclusive. Some of the suggested solutions include the following:

- "The use of current community volunteer agencies and leaders to develop reading circle groups.

- Recruiting volunteer tutors using students from high school, college, and other work study programs.

- Providing literacy tutor training to community support volunteers."

"Building Bridges" noted that "the greatest potential impact of the project was to motivate a number of programs and agencies into action and to

create an awareness of the issues and challenges which each sector faces when planning and delivering services to adults with (developmental) disabilities.

"If each agency would implement just one challenge, the project could be considered a success.

"To be more realistic, the impact of the project has been to raise awareness and to foster dialogue between the two service sectors. By conducting personal interviews, facilitating focus groups, and offering (training) workshops, the level of awareness of literacy issues for adults with (developmental) disabilities has risen.

"Regionally, the need for ongoing dialogue between the two service sectors has been brought into clearer focus for many agencies."

In its final results and recommendations, the Report calls for the "commitment by participants of the Local Planning and Coordination groups, and their responsibility to include stakeholders in literacy service planning will ensure that the door remains open to dialogue." Following *"Building Bridges"*, Tri-County has:

- "Provided learning disability training for LBS practitioners and Community Living organizations staff.

- April/May 2002: Funded Laubach training with remaining Project funding for DSW Students at St. Clair College in Chatham.

Laubach provides training for people to improve their basic and functional skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, numeracy and other life skills."

The Project also recommended the exploration of inclusion of a literacy component within college Developmental Services Worker Programs, with discussions at a provincial level.

A report, available in the winter of 2001, indicates that since adults with developmental disabilities often receive support from a multitude of agencies and people, it is crucial that everyone knows what everyone else is doing and that they work with, and not against, each other.

It is strongly recommended that a holistic approach and shared communication be pursued to ensure consistency and responsibility when supporting individuals to participate in the lives of their respective communities.

KEY RESEARCH

The Literacy Preparation Project came about because of a stated need by literacy practitioners and front-line workers and community staff who work with adults with developmental disabilities.

These counsellors wanted an early assessment tool to help them gain more knowledge about the literacy skills of their clients.

The Training Manual

Literacy Preparation Project for Adults with Developmental
Disabilities Training Manual
Kenneth N. Beck and Patricia Hatt, 1998

The Training Manual assists workers in carrying out a literacy assessment as
well as having involvement in literacy readiness training.

The Manual says that it is "important to note that a number of assessment
documents do already exist in the field of literacy. Few, if any of these
documents, however, relate directly to adults with developmental
disabilities.

"The Common Assessment of Basic Skills (CABS) document is a good
example of a solid literacy assessment tool recognizing three ability levels,
i.e. Levels 1, 2, and 3 (the highest level).

"The Initial Literacy Assessment Profile (ILAP) differs in aiming at special
groups of adults, those with developmental disabilities, and attempts to
identify those common elements found in a variety of assessment
documents.

*"The ILAP is meant to provide basic information about the potential adult
learner with developmental disabilities prior to entry to a literacy agency.*

Developing the Profile

Basic Background Information:

"In any learning situation, the first important element of information will
revolve around communications. Can the potential learner make known
ideas, feelings, or intentions to the front-line worker? Does the learner
speak, write, gesture, or touch? In other words, how is the message
encoded and how is it transmitted? Can we really understand what learners
are trying to tell us and how they get the message across?"

Gathering the Information:

"Gathering basic background information is a key and essential element of any literacy agency. The way in which the information is gathered by the worker/counsellor becomes an extremely sensitive issue.

There is much evidence to suggest that adults with developmental disabilities have been made dependent in many aspects of their lives. Through identification of the common elements, those who work with adults with developmental disabilities have the opportunity to become partners in literacy education, not by becoming instructors, but by helping in the provision of resources, the mobilizing of support, and the promotion of awareness of literacy issues."

Elements of the Profile

Common Elements:

"These common elements need not be discussed in any order. The idea is to help the adult learner communicate in as comfortable a manner as possible:

- Background Survey about Personal Data

- Current Living Arrangements - Environment

- Transportation, Accommodations

- Employment

- Language, Education, and Prior Learning

- Health

- Skills (Specific; Transferable)

- Goals

- Interest Areas"

Additional Issues:

- "Attention and Self-Esteem

- Preferred Learning Patterns

1. Visual learner: remembers visual details; follows along when others read; prefers to see what's to be learned; needs written instruction; has trouble following lecture

2. Kinesthetic learner: has to know it to do it; prefers activity-based learning; studies by writing over and over; may be restless in class.

3. Auditory learner: enjoys oral discussions; studies by talking aloud; requires oral explanations; reinforces doing a task by talking through it."

The Manual indicates that the ILAP is not expected to be "a standardized test since it is a complex process to assess adult literacy. As Garard Giordano noted in *"Literacy Programs for Adults with Developmental Disabilities,"* formal tests contain biases that can invalidate the results of the tests but the validity of tests can be increased by complementing them with supplementary data.

An assessment portfolio, for example, would be a good opportunity for gathering supplementary data, (*"Common Assessment of Basic Skills: Using a Learning Outcomes Approach"*)."

The Manual includes a variety of resource sheets, charts, and forms plus a resource entitled "Simple Tools", a handout from a lecture given by David Pratt of Queen's University in February of 1996. The document is included to "reinforce the notion that good educational strategies are not packaged in curriculum or contained in a prepared program.

Good strategies come from using what is in your environment that is meaningful and useful to the learner."

Working with Learning Outcomes for Adults with Developmental Disabilities,
Kenneth N. Beck and Patricia Hatt, October 1999.

"The Project examined existing literacy outcomes, conducted a literature search, and held focus groups with front-line literacy practitioners, adult learners, and developmental workers and counsellors.

"The central purpose was to identify ways in which the Demonstrations of the Learning Outcomes could best enhance success for adults with developmental disabilities in literacy programs. A major theme of the project was to maintain the integrity of literacy programs and to ensure successful literacy opportunities for adult learners' individual growth and progress.

"The same demonstrations, contained in the document, were disseminated through workshops attended by literacy practitioners and individuals who work with adults with developmental disabilities. The report documents the results of the Demonstrations of Learning Outcomes workshops to organizations and individuals representing the fields of literacy and developmental disabilities.

"The literature search, interviews with literacy practitioners, interviews with front-line workers who work with adults with developmental disabilities, and a review of the provincial research materials strongly indicated that:

- Specific learning outcomes can create barriers to literacy success for adults with developmental disabilities, but
- Specialized learning outcomes could be used while maintaining the integrity of programs for adults with developmental disabilities.

"Literacy practitioners in the field were under the false impression that the Learning Outcomes process focused only on the everyday abilities of learners and required progress through the levels of the Matrix under strict time limitations. Employability, movement through the Learning Outcomes Matrix levels, and strict time limitations for attaining skill gaps certainly would create barriers for adults with developmental disabilities.

"Practitioners needed assurance that the limited employability of some adults with developmental disabilities did not disqualify them from attending

literacy programs, and that there was flexibility in the time-frame for learner skill development. Most important, literacy practitioners needed to see that clear Demonstrations consistent with the Learning Outcomes approach could be developed for these learners.

The Demonstrations would be recognized by other service providers, and would enhance accountability to learners, governments, and the public.

Concerns and Potential Barriers:
Eligibility
"Many literacy practitioners and developmental workers or counsellors worried that learners with developmental disabilities would be excluded because they didn't fit the prescribed Matrix. These adult learners were, in effect, in the Early Stages of literacy.

"Discussion and focus groups with these practitioners clarified that these learners should not be excluded from literacy programs. What was important was that the adult learner have some motivation to begin a literacy program. Literacy programs should not be just a "place to go," to enhance social skills.

"Learners, especially those with developmental disabilities, will only be successful if they have a reason to learn and goals that require literacy skills. Literacy can become the conduit for success, and it must be the focus for accountability in literacy agencies and programs.

"Although the assignment of a level is a key aspect of the Learning Outcomes Matrix, what is more important is that literacy goals can be set and that there is some measure of progress towards those goals.

Goals
"The goal-setting process appeared to be an issue for a number of literacy practitioners. In some cases, a clear misunderstanding of the necessary requirements were voiced. "My adult learners will never be able to set their own goals" or "am I allowed to help my learner with their goal setting?" was repeated time after time (the response to this query is "yes").

"Learner-centred assessment and goal setting can be formal or informal. The important point is that goals be set either by the learner or by the learner with the practitioner. Learning goals should not be set by a literacy practitioner, or other person alone, without the willing involvement of the learner.

Time-lines
"Nowhere do the guidelines state definite time limits to learn and develop skills required by learner goals. Interview results, however, noted that practitioners were extremely worried that their adult learners would not be able to achieve specific goal-sets toward observable outcomes within a set time limit.

"Although the Learning Outcomes process does focus on results, it also allows for flexibility in the development of an individual training plan and the time taken to complete the training plan. The professional judgment of literacy practitioners is of the essence."

Demonstrations developed in the document are "a simpler form for tracking purposes when learners have been assessed to have very basic literacy skills. Once again, the issue of the speed is not as important as being able to show learner progress toward stated goals."

Movement from Level to Level
"Interview and focus group sessions showed that there is great apprehension about moving students from one level to the next. For example, moving a learner from Level 1 through Levels 2 or 3 was felt to be an impossible task with some learners. In fact, this "barrier" does not exist in the Learning Outcomes process.

"The significant factor is not so much moving the learner from one level to the next but helping the learner help himself/herself make progress toward an agreed-upon goal.

"Fear of failure may terrify many learners - they may fear that they will not be allowed to continue in the literacy program, or they may have a history of repeated failure. Small steps achieved in a positive way through goal-setting within a level make the on-going process one of continuous learning."

Employment and Goal Achievability
"Although employment is a realistic goal for many people under the Learning Outcomes process, it may not be realistic in any sense for some adults with developmental disabilities.

"What becomes extremely important is that the process not be taken to the extreme since it then defeats the purpose. 'Overwhelming' should not be a description of the Learning Outcomes process and (Literacy and Basic Skills) fully realizes that some adults with developmental disabilities will not be fully employable. These learners should not and are not to be excluded from literacy programs because of employment issues.

"A number of respondents commented that progress for learners with developmental disabilities is slow and that repetition is a 'must.'

"Does slow literacy development mean that the learners must leave the literacy program? The answer is no; flexibility is the key, with literacy practitioners using clear judgment in training plan development and methodology to help the learner achieve literacy goals."

Emotional Make-up and Learner Sensitivity
"Many adult learners with developmental disabilities (and other Special Needs as well) are on medications. This is a factor that is often not taken into account, in some cases because the practitioner doesn't know about it. The issue calls for closer communication among all parties involved because of problems the learner may exhibit for no reason apparent to the literacy worker."

The Goal-Directed Assessment Process
"Five assessments make up the process leading to the development of a Training Plan:[6]

- Assessment of the learner's personal, educational, and employment background.
- Assessment of the learners' long-term and short-term goals.
- Assessment of the skills needed to reach those goals
- Assessment of the learner's current abilities
- Assessment of the learner's skill gaps and a plan of action to reach the goals.

"For adults with developmental disabilities, we need to take into account that although the learning process has its focus on results, it also stresses the need for a learner-centred structure which is flexible and manageable.

"The Training Plan developed through the assessment process must be realistic in its make-up in order that the Demonstration activities really do represent learning and achievement. For adults with developmental disabilities, it is crucial that the Demonstrations are not only transferable to real life situations but also reflect the learner's cultural context. Demonstrations should:

- Be related to the learner's goals
- Have identified literacy components
- Be achievable and realistic

- Not be developed to serve the needs of caretakers, workers, or counsellors; not be based on the need to develop social skills in interpersonal relationships
- Not be so simple that no learning will occur or so difficult that they cannot be achieved."

The document gives numerous examples of successfully acquired skills through a variety of case studies.

"Working with Learning Outcomes" makes a number of observations and recommendations:

- "Literacy practitioners should be provided with sufficient time to get to know the learner's needs as related to his or her individual lifestyle. Without the preparatory time to assess, and without the learner's being able to identify his or her own goals, the likelihood of success is minimal.
- "Learners must have an identified literacy need to work toward. After exhaustive investigation of a multitude of skills, there is no question that adults with developmental disabilities can succeed.
- "The Learning Outcomes process can facilitate closer communication between literacy practitioners, workers/counsellors, and families.
- "Research confirms the resolve of literacy practitioners interviewed to grow and learn in order to help adults with developmental disabilities in the literacy process.

"Literacy practitioners reiterated the basic premise that adults with developmental disabilities may not move through the five levels of the Matrix, but given the plethora of skills within each level, there is plenty of room for growth and development of practical literacy skills.

"Literacy practitioners agree that the Demonstrations provided a concrete goal to the learning process and could be used, when advisable, as an exit assessment. The fact that the demonstrations describe concrete, 'hands on' action enables learners with developmental disabilities to appreciate their success in a tangible form. For example, some practitioners felt that the demonstrations could be written as a form of accomplishment and presented to learners as a Certificate of Achievement. The study noted that it became

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6 "Getting Started: Learning Outcomes Orientation and Training for Anglophone LBS Agencies, Toronto, ON, Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, 1998, p. 6.

evident during the interviews and workshops that there was an "enormous need for continued in-service training in the area of literacy vis-à-vis adults with developmental disabilities.

A Literacy Stages Chart found in the *"Literacy Preparation Project for Adults with Developmental Disabilities"* training manual describes stages of literacy preparedness for individuals up to Stage Three. These individuals are deemed ready and appropriate for community literacy programs.

KEY RESEARCH

Literacy Ontario's "Best Practices in Literacy for Adults with Developmental Disabilities" looks to a number of existing literacy programs that exemplify success according to basic principles of access.

Information has been drawn from both inclusive programs and programs that serve the specific needs of adults with developmental disabilities.

Best Practices in Literacy

Best Practices in Literacy for Adults with Developmental Disabilities, Literacy and Basic Skills Section, Workplace Preparation Branch, Ministry of Education & Training, 1998.

"There appears to be little, if any, valid and reliable research published pertaining to literacy and adults with developmental disabilities. The research that does exist is generally investigative in nature; like this study, it provides recommendations based upon data collection and analysis.

"General Findings

Benefits of Literacy Programs:

All of the successful literacy programs studied are founded upon a strong understanding of the many benefits of improved literacy for adults with developmental disabilities. Improving upon literacy skills can be a meaningful experience for any adult. However, improving literacy can be even more important for adults with developmental disabilities than for adults without disabilities.

Literacy can have a significant effect and impact across life domains for individuals with disabilities (Erickson, Koppenhaver, and Yoder, 1994).

"The investigation results also support the claim that literate individuals with developmental disabilities are more readily accepted by their peers (Donahue and Prescott, 1988).

"There is no doubt that enhanced learner communication has improved self-esteem.

Learner Assessment:

"The assessment of learners' successes and challenges in their literacy programs is taken seriously in all of the agencies studied. Assessments include two phases: initial assessments and the evaluation of continued progress. These phases may differ from each other slightly, but most often the initial assessment is seen to be the beginning of the continuing process of program evaluation and learner progress.

"As well, there is no question that progress more and more is being measured through learner-centred assessment and goals. This outcome was not the case as recently as three years ago. All successful programs integrate learning plans into their evaluative processes. Methods of assessment vary from program to program; however, as in other areas, there are some common features to the assessment process in successful programs.

Best Practices

Initial Assessments:

- "Initial assessments are either formal, or informal and followed by formal assessments.

- "The initial judgment about access is made by a coordinator/supervisor or a teacher.

- "The assessment is often carried out by the same person who becomes the teacher.

- "In some cases, assessments are used to establish ineligibility but it is important to note that these same programs make certain that appropriate referrals to other agencies are carried out."

Progress:

- "Progress is measured by learner-centred assessment and goals.

- "Progress is defined by whether or not the stated goals and objectives have been met.

- A variety of methods and materials (written, computer, oral discussions) are used to appraise the learning readiness, experience, and skills of the learner.

- The learner is always encouraged to participate in the choosing of materials for assessment purposes.

- Teacher-tutor contact and feedback are crucial to learner motivation in the assessment process in overcoming learner fears, past poor educational experiences, and dependency on others.

- An individualized evaluative approach is taken that is appropriate for each learner.

- Evaluation is considered to be an ongoing process."

Professional Development:

"Maintaining and developing the competence of teachers and tutors is considered to be part of the recipe for successful adult literacy programs. While many programs are limited in their resources, creative approaches to professional development have been an important part of the programs studied.

- All of the agencies studied have developed teacher/tutor training programs.

- Training is considered to be a continuous process.

- Training formats for teachers and tutors are both formal and informal.

- The staff of teacher/tutor volunteers have opportunities to attend workshops, conferences, and other professional development programs."

Community Integration:

"Literacy programs can play a large role in enhancing community integration. Successful programs have common philosophies and practices around community integration:

- Literacy is considered to be a bridge to learner participation in the broader community and community partnerships.

- Most programs note that bridging the learner to the community is a stated objective of the program.

- In many instances, key community members have been brought in to demonstrate community support of the program (as volunteers; in fundraising efforts).

- Many programs take their students into their communities to enhance banking skills; use libraries as resources; learn and use the transportation system; write and read shopping lists; enhance consumer skills; and enhance social skills.

- The cooperation of community agencies and businesses is sought in making the projects successful.

- Community response in most cases has been one of full cooperation.

"Literacy delivery agencies have helped learners to participate more fully in their communities. Some learners have 'leisure buddies' (other volunteers) to facilitate that participation."

The document contains a number of charts and forms including recruiting for tutor training, a volunteer contract, assessment forms, a student interest inventory, learning plans, learner diaries, and daily work plans.

CONSULTATION

Building community capacity means having a participatory process…

…developing a shared vision, leadership, resources, and skills with communities, and…

…strengthening linkages, networks, and collective process.

Community Outreach: Actions and Conclusions

"Focus on Literacy: Reaching Common Ground" was the first of a number of community workshops, focus groups, and individual interviews as part of the consultation phase of the Special Needs Networking Project. Drawing together organizations from London, Middlesex, Elgin and Oxford Counties, the workshop used a community round table format, with an experienced facilitator with significant ties to the literacy community, leading organizations through a number of small group and plenary discussions. Findings from the workshop are found in the Appendix.

Many of these agencies were coming together as a Special Needs group for the first time. Some of these organizations had been working together for some time, in the London area as Partners in Employment (PIE) and Partners in Leisure (PIL). What was needed was an environment in which to share literacy-focused ideas, discuss issues, do some creative problem-solving to begin to address gaps in service, and begin to build new alliances.

Since then there have been a number of other smaller meetings, focus groups, interviews, and follow-up meetings intended to:

- Further develop these literacy-focused discussions.

- More specifically assess client and service provider needs, not met by current services or by provincially funded Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) services.

- And continue to facilitate discussions about ways to address gaps in service and more effectively meet the literacy needs of Special Needs clientele.

The Project also solicited the assistance of a small number of Special Needs Project Community Advisors, to provide input and advice on Project focus, direction, and findings.

A close working relationship with the area's Local Training Board, who sponsored the first workshop, was extremely helpful.

Following the initial workshop, Literacy Link South Central offered to begin to work to address some of the strategies and barriers identified by Special Needs agencies:

- to find ways to continue to work with these agencies to look at how to create new programs to address gaps in service;

- to regularly inform decision-makers about these community planning and service delivery efforts;

- to work closely with a small number of Special Needs agencies over the next year to deliver literacy-focused training, and to extend these training opportunities to others in the future.

During the spring of 2002, the Project worked closely with the Project Advisory group, reporting on on-going activities and drawing on individual members skills, experience, and knowledge of both the broader field of Special Needs services and the communities in which they worked.

Service Provider Questionnaire:
The group also assisted with the development of a service provider questionnaire developed to gather information on special needs organizations in the LLSC catchment area (London, Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford, Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk Counties) and to gain further insights into literacy issues and challenges from organizations across the area.

The survey was sent to a list of more than 40 organizations, with follow-up telephone calls made to discuss the survey and invite further participation. Surveys distributed electronically to Brant, Elgin, Haldimand, Middlesex, Norfolk, and Oxford County Special Needs service providers and London Groups supported earlier Workshop findings about service delivery gaps and issues.

Many organizations spoke about a lack of programs, one-to-one assistance and assistive devices and limited space in classes. Challenges most often noted included: financial and personal issues, lack of information about programs, lack of assistive devices, social attitudes, and limited numbers of trained volunteers.

Recommended actions included more cooperative programming with community-based service providers who do not have expertise to deliver literacy programs; more rural programs; sharing of resources, more programming for the deaf population; more programs geared to quality of life and skills maintenance.

The need for literacy sensitivity audits, in-home computer services, and in-house assessments were also mentioned.

One organization said that "Lifelong learning seems to be a term that is accepted only for individuals who do not face barriers to learning. Creating an environment where small gains can be acknowledged and long-term learning plans are supported would provide individuals with barriers greater opportunities to explore and expand their potential."

Special Needs organizations might become more fully engaged focused on literacy, by working "together to define future directions"; creating and enhancing programming through partnership, collaboration, and resource-sharing; creating a higher profile for literacy; working with and supporting small numbers of learners as they work to achieve their literacy goals more independently; and being a resource to community education programs.

A service delivery model should be collaborative, individualized, and flexible, survey participants said. Educational Assistants should be include in Adult Learning Programs. Finally, a network was extremely important not only to address client needs and many agencies' sense of isolation, but also to resolve the Special Needs group's lack of access to community literacy planning efforts to date.

Such a network would help both Special Needs and the community as well.

A summary of results gathered in the survey is included in the Appendix.

Project Advisors contributed to research materials gathered during the Project. The group also designed the format and content of the final Workshop, reviewed the Final Report, and initiated the next steps to be taken by the group at the completion of the Project.

Brant, Haldimand, and Norfolk Activities:
In Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk, the Project worked with the Grand Erie Training & Adjustment Board and its new Administrator, Jill Wood. While the area Training Board was one of the last Boards to come together when the Training Board process was initiated, the new Administrator's enthusiasm for the Project and involvement in the communities served by the Board, was also extremely helpful to the Project.

In Haldimand and Norfolk Counties, the Project worked with a Board Committee, the H/N Employment Needs and Issues Committee for Persons with Disabilities (see Members List in Appendix). That committee brought together service providers and funders from across the mostly rural two-county area.

A focus group conducted with the committee in Simcoe on July 2nd looked at literacy issues, the challenges faced by rural service providers, and ways to work together, (See Focus Group Report in Appendix). The service provider survey was also circulated electronically to committee members with follow-up telephone calls made and e-mail messages sent to gather more information. The group also agreed to consider literacy as a significant issue needing attention during strategic planning efforts currently underway.

In Brant, the Project again worked through a Training Board Committee, the GETAAB Brant Service Providers for People with Disabilities (see Members List in Appendix). Working with the Local Training Board, the Project circulated the service provider survey to Brant Committee members, and a broader list of organizations drawn from an Internet search.

Overall, the Project found that round table discussions, with the gathering of information done over the course of the event, and individual interviews most productive in gaining input from community organizations. Electronic distribution of the service provider survey by e-mail was challenged by a number of factors.

While this means of communication was an effective and efficient way for LLSC to gather and distribute information over a significantly large geographic area, some service providers experienced difficulty in receiving the document for a number of reasons, including secured fire walls preventing materials from being received, virus protection concerns, sharing of computers, and lack of time to answer e-mail requests and correspondence.

Literacy program-delivery information drawn from the survey, planning documents, and shared by a number of other information-gathering networks will be used in compiling a Special Needs literacy program database at LLSC.

Barriers Identified

Barriers identified during Round Table and focus group discussions included:

- Eligibility criteria: government restrictions in numbers, time frames for learning/lack of flexibility.

- Reduced or targeted funding

- Format: lack of one to one

- Different Learning Styles

- Accessibility/Transportation/Child care

- Behaviours and Attitudes: employers, self, family

- Lack of information about services

- Lack of motivation; attention span

- Learning disabilities (undiagnosed)

- Health, physical, and psychological

- No early identification, intervention

- Lack of training, professional development for literacy tutors, workers, etc.

- Communication, language barriers, non-verbal

Solutions

- Educate community and government at all levels: need for more funding, showing costs to the system, society, if person is not in program

- Encourage participants to advocate needs;

- Ministries should dialogue amongst themselves

- Agencies need to network with each other and share resources; with libraries, others working in the community

- Developing ideas, proposals, partnerships important

- Working together to create new service delivery model to meet current and future needs

- Working with participants, to ensure that one to one service is provided

- Ensure that basic needs are met first (housing, finances, etc.)

- Training plan focuses on life skills and prioritises activities

- On-going counselling is provided

- Appropriate assessment, support services and assistive devices are found; Common Assessment is used

- Promoting "community champions" to share learner success stories

- Staff training

- Use of inclusive language

Action Planning: Promoting Accessibility

A July community workshop in London addressed action planning:

How can we promote increased accessibility?

1. Coordinated Planning, including:

--Developing a Special Needs community literacy plan, through various small and large group meetings, including annual or semi-annual community round tables, facilitated by LLSC. Such a plan would include:

   a. Gathering material about community resources and specialized programs and services.
   b. Identifying unmet needs and gaps.
   c. Advocating for programs: suggesting ways to meet needs.
   d. Encouraging public/decision-makers be informed, promoting improvement of accessibility, facilities, and services.
   e. Addressing attendant care services.

--Tabling Special Needs Literacy community planning document in mainstream literacy planning activities, include Project Report.

--Creating and supporting joint social marketing and outreach activities to involve the general public, by involving the media, talking to groups.

2. Increased assessment opportunities
3. Appropriate referrals to community literacy programs.
4. Clarification of eligibility criteria
5. Directory of literacy programs so that community agencies know what programming is available, gaps identified, duplication addressed.
6. Emphasis on year-round services.
7. Explore possible linkages between SN group, LLSC, Local Training Board, London-Middlesex Labour Market Planning Council, Network to Learning etc. (assists other categories as well).

Action Planning: Establishing and Maintaining Alliances

1. Create a Special Needs website or add section to existing website.

2. Work with other organizations that promote or are actively engaged in literacy, such as libraries.

3. Catalog other resources and trained volunteers.

4. Lobby government for more literacy programs and advocate on behalf of best community programs and practices.

5. Gain broader understanding of current partnerships in community.

6. Create opportunities to dialog thereby enhancing existing collaborative efforts.

7. Explore partnerships, including Literacy Link South Central, Training Boards, Network to Learning, Partners in Employment, Partners in Leisure, others.

8. Explore potential for new pilot programs and/or for the enhancement of regular programming:

--follow-up necessary re potential HRDC, MTCU pre-literacy pilot program.

--adding literacy module to existing programs, (Youth En Route etc.).

--Linkages to local colleges and universities (see work already being done with Seneca and St. Clair College programs).

Action Planning: Using Resources More Effectively

1. Create inventory of resources and services (who offers what, numeracy, basics etc.); publish directory of services or enhance already existing directories.

2. Regularly link agencies involved with consultations; hold round tables and/or focus groups twice a year.

3. Use electronic information-sharing (website linkages, chat rooms, e-mail discussion groups) to keep people informed, and share ideas.

4. Continue outreach efforts to connect with and inform the broader community.

5. Look for new partners to bring additional resources and $ (Industrial Accident Prevention Association, Unions, Industry, School Boards, Health Units, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, other federal and provincial ministries, Partners in Leisure, Libraries, others), groups with broad understanding of necessity of life skills; quality of life issues.

6. Support and find ways to fund workplace programs and identify learning issues there.

7. Find additional volunteers and resources in college and university programs.

8. Develop communications materials and locate and distribute funding opportunities, training materials.

9. Bring resources to rural communities, find ways to introduce to homes; enhance information in HRDC kiosks about literacy issues.

Action Planning: Supporting Professional Development

1. Promote information-sharing: Hold a "trade" show, bringing SN organization administrators and front-line workers together to talk about what each agency or group does; possibly include public.

2. Identify and pursue mutual professional development opportunities.

3. Recruit:
   - more volunteer tutors,

   - specialized volunteers,

   - link volunteers working in other organizations, volunteer groups,

   - create specialized volunteer inventory,

   - provide specialized training including Adult Learning Principles and recognition for work with SN populations,

   - ensure professional development is seen as a significant community planning issue,

   - hold SN professional development round tables.

4. Special Needs website location would include support worker contact information for individuals requiring assistance in accessing or understanding materials.

5. Locate base funding to support training opportunities: when holding SN professional development round tables, invite funders, other community partners and organizations to participate.

Action Planning: How LLSC Can Work with the Group

Ways that LLSC can work with the group:

As a networking organization, LLSC is positioned well to facilitate community development. Actions discussed or already initiated include:

1. Model Development: Will continue to develop use of community development model, including holding community round tables to gather, share information, address issues, gaps in service, and provide information.

2. Community Planning: Will work with group to bring SN community planning to Literacy Community Planning table.

3. Information sharing: Will add information to SN section of website, including events, professional development opportunities, services inventory and linkages from Project & new project; potential newsletter.

4. Professional Development: Will offer professional development training to agencies (Literacy Sensitivity Audit; how information is conveyed to persons with disabilities) and individuals (Clear Writing workshops); opportunities offered on a cost-sharing, train-the-trainer basis.

5. Tutor training: LLSC willing to explore providing literacy tutor training for SN volunteers, if no one else is providing service; developing some type of recognition/certificate.

6. Additional Resources: EMO Local Training Board has offered support toward networking meetings; literacy information enhanced in latest Environmental Scan; groups included have an interest in literacy.

7. Co-ordination: Will explore funding for staff person to link with SN group to work on suggested list of activities.

8. Project report to be circulated to Special Needs organizations and other community partners, funders, politicians, the media, and others.

Action Planning: Community Development Outcomes

Beginning the Process:

Discussions during the Project increasingly centred around the use of community development to bring Special Needs organizations, other community groups, and funders and potential funders to the table to address issues, gaps in service, enhance present programming, explore options, and create new service delivery opportunities.

Linkages to other existing Networks and information sources In some communities a networking group already existed that met regularly to address the needs of persons with disabilities. In London two groups exist, Partners in Employment and Partners in Leisure. Formed in 1999, Partners in Leisure (PIL) is a consortium of service providers, funders and consumers in London-Middlesex working cooperatively to develop a coordinated and responsive leisure service system for persons with disabilities.

For the purpose of PIL, leisure includes recreation, supported voluntarism, life skills and lifelong learning as a means of enhancing the self esteem, skills and overall well-being of the individual. Literacy has also been included.

PIL is hosted by Hutton House and funded by HRDC and the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services. Partners in Leisure has developed the Leisure Directory for People with Disabilities which is available in book form and through their website at www.accessleisure.org.

The area's Network to Learning Project is one example of a service delivery partnership that is currently looking for additional partnerships. The Project provides free psychological assessments for adults who suspect they may have a learning disability and offers technology-based training solutions for adults with literacy and numeracy barriers to education and employment.

Current partners include Accommodation, Training, and Networking, the Centre for Lifelong Learning, the Amethyst School, Fanshawe College Disability Services, Learning Disabilities Association of London Region, WIL Counselling and Training for Employment, and St. Thomas' Arthur Voaden Secondary School.

In other communities Adult Education Councils or committees addressed such needs. In Elgin, Oxford, Middlesex, Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk Counties the two Local Training Boards both had reference groups that addressed the needs of persons with disabilities, from service providers' perspectives.

Role of LLSC:

In all areas, linkage of Special Needs organizations and Special Needs literacy providers with Literacy Link South Central, and through LLSC to community literacy providers, was considered extremely important. The Project not only facilitated literacy-focused networking opportunities at two Community Round Tables and a focus group, but also circulated reports on these three events to a broader consultation list of Special Needs organizations. The list itself has also been shared with other groups.

Follow-up conversations with organizations led to a number of additional outcomes. LLSC has already initiated literacy sensitivity audit training with three agencies in the London area and plans to broaden this training offering next year. A discussion about providing literacy services with the London branch of the Canadian Hearing Society led to the agency's Executive Director, participating in the spring literacy community planning activity.

Project Service Provider Surveys have provided information both in raw data and summary forms and a database of Special Needs service providers information has been initiated. Finally, a Community Resource Compilation of Literacy and Disability Reports Resources and other Project resource materials are being added to the Resource Library at LLSC.

Adopting a similar approach:

The Elgin Middlesex Oxford Local Training Board has adopted the community consultation/round table model for its Persons with Disabilities Reference Group, used during the Focus on Literacy: Reaching Common Ground Workshop held by the Project in February, 2002.

The Local Board invited the Project Coordinator to participate in the first Special Needs discussions devoted to preparing the agency's Environmental Scan. The round table model and the Project consultation list was used to design and deliver this outreach vehicle.

"Using a topic-specific round table model for community consultation allows the Persons with Disabilities Reference Group to have a wider range of participants providing input than we had been able to do in the past," says

Local Training Board Executive Director Deb Mountenay. "Our Local Training Board reference groups are intended to be open doors for providing input on identifying local needs and gaps not closed committees.

"The round table model allows individuals and organizations to participate in the discussions they feel pertinent to their situation and decline those that do not, while still maintaining a connection between the Local Training Board and the organizations.

"I think that the project has been very valuable already as it has created a dialogue and a connection between groups that had not previously been involved. The first step in the development of future partnerships is in awareness of the possible partners available. This project has already succeeded in providing that first step. The information contained in the report will certainly be valuable to this community, but there is no greater value that can be provided to anyone than to meet someone else who sincerely cares about the same issues you do."

The Project also provided labour market information and resource linkages found during the research phase of the Project to the consultant preparing the Board's 2002 Environmental Scan.

Potential for Partnerships:

A Project presentation before London's Partners in Employment Funders' Forum led to preliminary discussions about the potential for a pre-literacy pilot program or enhancement of already existing programming, such as Youth En Route.

Youth En Route serves the counties of Middlesex, Grey, Bruce, Huron, Perth, Oxford and Elgin, providing transitional supports for young adults up to 29 years of age. Continued Education is one of the focuses, either for college preparation (classes are offered in this area), assistance in resolving barriers or issues attending secondary education, assistive devices, connecting participants to literacy opportunities throughout these counties, etc.

Youth En Route is funded through HRDC and coordinated by Hutton House with its primary partner, the Thames Valley Children's Centre.

Both federal and provincial government counterparts have indicated a willingness to discuss support for such an effort, which might also have potential for pre-employment preparation programming, with LBS providing the instruction component, drawn from a pool of existing funds.

LBS also recommended tabling the project report at the Fall community planning meeting on September 19th:

Laura Hamilton, the Provincial Regional Literacy and Basic Needs Consultant told participants in the final round table that "The Literacy and Basic Skills program is committed to meeting the literacy and numeracy needs of the individual communities we serve.

"Local LBS delivery agencies will review the recommendations from this group as part of their literacy services planning process for 2003/04 and work to adjust programming to meet the needs identified by this group. This could result in new activity and/or partnerships in delivery.

"Your contribution is significant, thank you for your participation and commitment to this process. We look forward to some new and creative approaches to meeting the needs of this population of learners."

Action Planning: Some Final Thoughts

A final roundtable was held in London for Elgin, Middlesex, and Oxford Special Needs organizations and community partners. As suggested by "Building Bridges", the London area group worked together to create the first steps in the development of a community action plan, based on templates used in the Chatham Project's Final Report.

These included how to " Promote Increased Accessibility; Establish and Maintain Alliances; use Existing Resources More Effectively; Provide or Support Volunteer and Staff Training; and develop Pilot Projects or enhanced pre-employment preparation programming that would enhance or reflect these activities.

Use of Round Tables, Large Group and Small Group Settings:

This group liked the round table model used to gather information and to begin to develop a regular way for these organizations to network. Some felt that adding small group facilitators and recorders would ensure that everyone at each table was heard and that information was recorded accurately.

While some felt that the group needed to grow in numbers before initiating activities, others felt that a smaller working group should begin to meet regularly to advance the work of the larger group, and report back in spring and fall round tables.

Outreach and Network Co-ordination:

The group agreed that most agency administrators cannot devote significant time to community development, but strongly support the need for such activity. This is particularly important to further develop the emerging informal network of Special Needs organizations in the area.

They also agreed that further continued community outreach and information sharing would address the isolation issues felt by many organizations, particularly those working in rural communities.

More Outreach Needed:

The group felt that community outreach to more organizations and groups in the three-county area was also necessary, particularly to bring in the voice of mental health organizations. Wider circulation of the Project's Final Report, not only to participants and the Literacy Community Planning groups, but also to other community partners, funders, politicians, and members of the media was also deemed important.

Resource Development at a Local Level:

Community Resource Development was deemed extremely important. The group felt that a co-ordinating function was necessary to provide and assist in both information and resource-sharing of such materials as Best Practice resources at a local level.

Cataloguing and summarizing these materials would be a function of the effort, along with on-going facilitation of the collaborative social planning efforts.

Actions that may be necessary include:

General:

- Coordination resource for SN service delivery outreach and linkages with other organizations and networks (PIE etc.)

- Demographics/Statistics; Information and resource retrieval

- Professional Development and Learning Initiatives Location

- Design development/recommendations, (i.e. restructuring of service delivery mechanisms and referrals; advanced communications; technologies; needs assessment vehicles and services.

- Communications: network newsletter; website

- Funding applications; funds available; sustainability issues

- Outcome evaluations.

Specific:

- Potential for LLSC to facilitate regular annual or semi-annual community round tables, with other community partners and funders invited to look at issues, gaps in service; gather and share information for community planning and programming purposes and for SN capacity-building efforts.

- The need for a Working Group to work with a part-time LLSC network coordinator to continue to look at service delivery model and programming evolution and information-gathering with regular reporting back to the broader SN community.

- Development of regional demographics

- Actions around Literacy Assessments

- Development of Referral Mechanisms

- Resource-sharing

- Role of LLSC: facilitator in community round tables, community planning and community service environmental scans and network to network connections; catalyst for partnership development; community partner in integration efforts; information and resource clearinghouse; professional development resource.

The Advisory Committee met in mid-July to review Project activities, discuss findings from the latest round table and other discussion groups and contacts, and consider the next steps for the emerging network. Discussion points and actions to be taken over the summer by this group and LLSC are included in the Appendix.

Appendix

RESEARCH

Information contained in this Appendix includes material specifically related to the Project.

Other information is contained as part of the Special Needs Networking Project Compilation, available at LLSC.

A listing of what is contained in this compilation of materials will soon be available at the agency.

A Literacy Backgrounder

Adult Literacy in Canada: [1]

- Twenty-two per cent of adult Canadians have serious problems dealing with any printed materials.

- An additional 24 per cent of Canadians can only deal with simple reading tasks.

- Western Canada and Ontario generally have higher literacy skills than Atlantic Canada and Quebec.

- Less than 10 per cent of Canadians that could benefit from literacy upgrading programs actually enroll. Research indicates that barriers like job or money problems, lack of child care and transportation are some of the reasons preventing people from enrolling.

- The proportion of immigrants at the lowest level of literacy is larger than the proportion of those born in Canada that are at this level. However, there are also proportionally more immigrants at the highest levels of literacy.

- There is a strong relationship between educational attainment and literacy level. Those with more education have higher literacy skills and those with less education have lower literacy skills. On the other hand, about 20 per cent of Canadians have lower literacy skills than their education might indicate, and 16 per cent have higher skills.

- Seventy-four per cent of young Canadians who graduate from high school have strong literacy skills. The remaining percentage can handle simple reading and writing tasks. Those who leave school before graduation generally have lower literacy skills.

- Canadians with the lowest literacy skills have higher rates of unemployment (26 per cent) and those with the highest skills have lower rates of unemployment (4 per cent).

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1 "Who Wants to Learn?", ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation, 2001.

- Canadians with low literacy skills are more likely to have lower incomes than those with higher skills. Over 80 per cent of Canadians at the lowest literacy level and over 60 per cent in the second lowest literacy level have no income, or incomes of less than $27,000.

- There is a correlation between literacy and wage levels in Canada. A recent study indicates that each additional year of education a person receives is worth 8.3 per cent on their pay cheque. Using an annual base salary of $30,000, this amounts to an additional $2,490 per year.[2]

- A significant number of older Canadians have low literacy skills. Forty per cent of Canadians over 65 have not completed primary school compared to 4 per cent of Canadians between 26 and 35. Poor literacy skills may lower the quality of life for seniors and increase their health and safety risks.[3]

Statistics Canada's *"Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society"* (1997) confirms that we have a serious literacy problem in Canada. Here are some of the facts:

- Literacy skills are like muscles - they are maintained and strengthened through regular use.

- The higher an individual's literacy level, the more likely he/she will be employed and have a higher income.

- Canadians use their literacy skills more in the workplace than at home.

- ABC CANADA's LEARN campaign with toll free numbers listed in all Yellow Pages directories across Canada, is just one way to connect learners with literacy organizations in their own communities.

- *The International Adult Literacy Survey*, conducted by The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in 1997, bluntly told Canada that its future competitiveness hinged on the degree to which we can raise literacy and learning levels in our society, and that one of our most vulnerable areas is the workplace.

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2 "Literacy, Numeracy, and Labour Market Outcomes in Canada," Statistics Canada, 2001.
3 Unless otherwise indicated, this information is derived from results of the International Adult Learning Survey (IALS), Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada, Statistics Canada, 1996.

ABC Canada suggests that these commonly used words and phrases are the preferred ways to communicate information about literacy:

- Use **"low literacy skills"** instead of **"illiterate"** The word "illiterate" is no longer used in literacy circles, as it represents only a small portion of the Canadian populations (less than five per cent).

The International Adult Literacy Survey:

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) was a large-scale co-operative effort by governments, national statistical agencies, research institutions and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The development and management of the survey were coordinated by Statistics Canada and the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey.

At various survey cycles, and in different ways, substantial input was received from the National Center for Education Statistics of the United States Department of Education.

IALS is the most comprehensive examination of literacy skills ever undertaken. It measured the literacy levels of individuals in twelve countries including Canada.

Participants:

In 1994, nine countries - Canada (English and French-speaking populations), France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland (German and French-speaking regions) and the United States - fielded the world's first large-scale, comparative assessment of adult literacy.

Data for seven of these countries were published in *Literacy, Economy and Society:* Results of the First International Adult Literacy Survey. Five additional countries or territories - Australia, the Flemish Community in Belgium, Great Britain, New Zealand and Northern Ireland - decided to administer the IALS instruments to samples of their adult populations in 1996. Comparative data from this round of collection were released in November 1997 in *Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society: Further Results from the International Adult Literacy Survey.* Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Slovenia and the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland - participated in a third, large-scale round of data collection in 1998.

Results for most of these countries are included in the third report, *Literacy in the Information Age: Final Report of the International Adult Literacy Survey.*

Data Collection:

The data presented in this third report were collected by the countries participating in successive cycles of data collection between 1994 and 1998, using nationally representative samples of the adult population aged 16-65.

The survey was conducted in people's homes by experienced interviewers. In brief, respondents were first asked a series of questions to obtain background information about them, e.g. demographic details, work history, etc.

Once this background questionnaire was completed, the interviewer presented a booklet containing six simple tasks. If a respondent failed to complete at least two of these correctly, the interview was adjourned. Respondents who completed two or more tasks correctly were then given a much larger variety of tasks, printed in a separate booklet.

The assessment was not timed, and respondents were urged to try each exercise. Respondents were thus given maximum opportunity to demonstrate their skills.

Various Definitions

Many previous studies have treated literacy as a condition that adults either have or do not have. The IALS no longer defines literacy in terms of an arbitrary standard of reading performance, distinguishing the few who completely fail the test (the "illiterates") from nearly all those who reach a minimum threshold (those who are "literate"). Rather, proficiency levels along a continuum denote how well adults use information to function in society and the economy.

Thus, literacy is defined as a particular capacity and mode of behaviour: "the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community - to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential."

Differences in levels of literacy matter both economically and socially: literacy affects every aspect of life, including employment, training opportunities, income from work and wider participation in society.

There are many literacy definitions, including:

Literacy Definition - "The information processing skills necessary to use the printed material commonly encountered at work, at home, and in the community."

Literacy Definition - "Literacy education is part of a process or cycle of lifelong learning, based on life experience, shared knowledge, and decision making by learners supported by their instructors. Literacy education contributes to the development of self-knowledge and critical thinking skills. In turn, this development empowers individuals and communities."

Literacy Definition - Adult literacy is defined in the Ontario document, *"The Quality Standards for Adult Literacy: A Practitioner's Guide"* as follows:

"Literacy is the ability to read, write, calculate, speak and understand as well as sign (for the deaf) and communicate in other symbolic forms of language, according to need. It is a continuum of these skills necessary for everyday life in the home, at work, in education, and in the community."

Reading – Twenty two percent of Canadian adults can use reading materials to carry out simple reading tasks only in familiar contexts with clearly laid out formats. They do not have the skills to cope with unfamiliar and more complex reading materials.

The reading skills of 16% of Canadian adults are too limited to allow them to deal with the majority of written material encountered in everyday life. This percentage covers 5% of people whose abilities are at Level 1 (see below) and 2% report that they have no abilities in English or French, for a total of 7% at the lowest level of reading skills.

Level 1 – People who have difficulty with printed materials and identify themselves as unable to read.

Level 2 – People who can use printed materials for limited purposes such as finding a familiar word in a simple text.

Level 3 – People who can use reading materials in a variety of situations providing it is simple, clearly laid out and the tasks involved are not too complex.

Level 4 – People who can use a wide range of reading materials and meet most every day reading demands.

Writing – Eighty-eight percent of Canadian adults are able to write a simple message. Two million Canadians were not included in the Statistics Canada results because they: a) did not have sufficient skills in either French or English, b) had limited reading skills in French or English, and c) refused to complete the writing tasks.

Numeracy – Reading and numeracy skills are closely related. The majority (62%) of Canadians have numeracy skills sufficient to handle the numerical tasks normally encountered in every day life. Twenty-four percent do not possess the necessary skills to meet most everyday numeracy requirements but can deal with familiar documents that require simple math skills such as addition and subtraction.

The remaining 14 percent of Canadians cannot perform numerical operations consistently but can recognize numbers in isolation or in a short text.[4]

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4 Adult Literacy In Canada: Results of a National Survey, Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1990. Accountability Framework for the Adult Literacy Education System and Core Quality Standards for Programs, Toronto: Ontario Training and Adjustment Board, 1994.

Literacy Definition - *"Special Needs Assessment Procedures,"* by Patricia Hatt, defines literacy as " the ability to read, write, calculate, speak, understand, sign, or communicate using other symbolic forms of language.

Literacy Definition - The Roeher Institute's Michael Bach, in *"Literacy, Disability, and Communication,"* says "No longer viewed as a set of particular skills, literacy refers to a status that accords people the opportunities and supports to communicate, given the skills and capacities they have and can develop.

To be literate is to have status, respect, and accommodation from others; to have skills in communication (verbal, written, sign, gestures, or other language); and to have access to the information and technologies that make possible self-determined participation in the communication processes of one's communities and broader society."

Literacy Definition - Literacy can also be defined as "the ability to understand and use written information to function in society, to achieve goals, and to develop knowledge and potential." (*Reading the Future,* 1996)

Literacy Definition - The *"Literacy Preparation Project for Adults with Developmental Disabilities: Training Manual,"* by Kenneth N. Beck and Patricia Hatt notes that the Scottish Community Education Council recognized that literacy is "The ability to read and write, commensurate with capability, as well as personal and social needs." The definition covers "those students who may never progress beyond writing their own name and address, and reading a few Social Sight words; those who can manage basic everyday tasks, writing a note, filling in a simple form, shopping, and perhaps reading parts of a newspaper or magazine; and those who will be able to read for pleasure and information, write a letter or keep a diary."

Literacy Definition - Literacy for a Deaf and/or Deaf-Blind person may also include:

- Using a TTY effectively for everyday telephone conversations.

- Using interpreters and note takers.

- Developing fluency in both languages ASL (receptive and expressive) or other alternative communication modes like British two-handed manual, lip reading, picture communication systems, etc. and English (reading and writing).

- Understand television and video programs by reading captions or subtitles.(5)

Descriptions of Disabilities - Patricia Hatt's "Special Needs Assessment Procedures" describes disabilities as:

- **Cognitive Disability:** This individual has limited intellectual potential in relation to the rest of the population. Cognitive disabilities may be inherited or created at any time during the person's life due to disease or injury.

  Often the person has associated problems with hearing, vision, mobility or the production of language. The largest group is people described as having developmental (or intellectual) disabilities.

- **Learning Disability** results from a problem with the way information is processed by a person. It is a pervasive issue in a person's life but may or may not affect literacy and numeracy. People in this group have average or above average intellectual potential.

- **Motor Disability:** These individuals have limits on their mobility, and may include Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, Spinal Cord injuries, Stroke or head injuries.

- **Psychiatric Disability:** a huge variety of mental health issues, where a diagnosis has been reached and the person is in remission or is treating the disability with some combination of therapies.

- **Sensory Disability:** These individuals have some loss of sight or hearing or both, with loss in any degree from minor to very significant.

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5 "Deaf and Deaf-Blind Literacy and Adult Basic Education in Ontario," prepared for Go/Goal-Ontario Literacy for Deaf People (G.O.L.D.) by Cheryl Wilson-Lunn. 1995.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adults

G.O.L.D.'s *"Deaf and Deaf-Blind Literacy…"* publication found that there were 18 programs in Ontario providing literacy and adult basic education to 306 Deaf and Deaf-Blind adults. Canadian National Institute for the Blind branches in London and Hamilton had literacy programming.

The *"Literacy Survey of Ontario's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adults,"* (Literacy and Basic Skills Section, Workplace Preparation Branch, Ministry of Education and Training) is based on the Ontario Literacy Survey of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, a special survey commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training.

The survey was conducted by Statistics Canada in the fall of 1996, and was modeled after the 1994 IALS survey. The Survey found that:

- 135,000 Ontarians or 2 per cent of the provincial adult population age 16-65 are Deaf or hard of hearing; of this number, 36 per cent have difficulty hearing a group; 39 per cent also have difficulty hearing a person; and 25 per cent are completely unable to hear.

- The literacy level of the Deaf and hard of hearing population falls below that of the rest of the Ontario population. In particular, 52 per cent have a low level of skills (below level 3) in document literacy, compared to 38 percent among the general Ontario population.

- Reading government and business information is the most challenging literacy task for many of the Deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

National Literacy Secretariat Funded Programs

Project Research located a number of interesting Project-based activities that may be of interest to Special Needs organizations. Some of these groups have indicated an interest in sharing Project outcomes and learnings with the Special Needs Networking Project. Some of these Projects include:

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ACTION READ COMMUNITY LITERACY CENTRE
2 Quebec Street Suite 220
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Adult Literacy and Adaptive Technology
Action Read Community Literacy Centre (Action Read) will study the potential benefits of using adaptive technologies in literacy programs for adults with learning disabilities. With the help of a learning specialist, they will research and explore various adaptive technology devices, such as specialized software, authoring programs and electronic books and make recommendations on their suitability for specific applications in the literacy field. They will also train staff and volunteers on how to use the equipment.

The technology will then be field-tested with a group of ten adults from the Action Read program who suffer from a range of learning needs and disabilities. The learners will have had their present learning needs assessed prior to the test, which will allow for the proper selection of devices to be used with each learner. Based on the field tests.

Action Read will produce a written report that will be shared on-line with other literacy providers in Ontario, and promoted through AlphaPlus and the National Adult Literacy Database.

The success of the project will be measured by the progress made by the learners in the test group and the efficiency of the training for staff.

Ms. Michelle Sylvestre
ALPHAPLUS CENTRE
2040 Yonge Street 3rd Floor
Toronto,ON M4S 1Z9
Tel. (416) 322-1012

Literacy Field Communications: 2001-2002
AlphaPlus Centre is a provincial leader in supplying information as well as resources to the literacy community in Ontario and has a solid infrastructure in place for providing technical support, training and field consulting services. This year, AlphaPlus will produce two publications, the Literacy Field Project Bulletin 2001-2002 and the Guide to Literacy Services 2001-2002, and enhance its technological capacities by updating its web site and researching the feasibility of switching its communication platform from Lotus Notes to Web Board.

The Literacy Field Project Bulletin provides literacy organizations with comprehensive information on government-funded literacy projects completed in the past year and the Guide to Literacy Services is an updated, reliable directory which facilitates referrals to various literacy programs and services across Ontario.

Both documents will be produced in French and English in print and searchable on-line database format (the Project Bulletin will also be available in electronic format) and distributed to literacy agencies and stakeholders.

AlphaPlus will also determine if it is feasible, reasonable and cost-effective to change their communication platform from Lotus Notes to Web Board, and their web site will undergo an extensive update taking into account the potential for new information and resources.

Measurable outcomes such as the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information contained in the various documents, as well as the effectiveness of the technological upgrades will determine the project's success.

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Developing a Research Culture in Ontario - Phase 1
AlphaPlus Centre, the Ontario provincial literacy resource centre, wants to provide the literacy field in Ontario with enhanced research-oriented services and become a one-stop source for research resources in adult literacy. In order to achieve this, AlphaPlus will first conduct a review of all adult literacy research that has taken place since 1980 and include it in a database that will be designed with the help of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and other partners.

They will then develop a new section dedicated to research for their web site to host the database, along with many other useful research tools, such as a search engine and links to other research sites, databases and electronic journals. AlphaPlus will also create a distinct library collection of carefully chosen research materials and study the feasibility of digitizing their periodicals collection, which would allow many journals, newsletters and bulletins that are currently only accessible to walk-in users to be made available electronically.

Feedback from the field, staff and founders as well as monthly reports by project staff will be used to evaluate the project's success.

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Materials Development for the Deaf Stream
AlphaPlus Centre, the Ontario provincial literacy resource centre, in partnership with Goal: Ontario Literacy for Deaf People (GOLD), will develop two CD ROM's containing an extensive collection of learning materials and curriculum for the Deaf literacy community in Ontario. These resources will be developed in direct response to the needs identified by the AlphaPlus Resources Selection Committees, the "What's Needed?" report (which analyzed the status of adult literacy resources in Ontario) and consultations with GOLD.

An advisory committee comprised of representatives from AlphaPlus, GOLD and the Deaf literacy community will guide the planning, development and production process. The resulting materials will be field-tested by Literacy and Basic Skills agencies and linked to the AlphaRoute web site (an on-line bank of interactive literacy activities) in order to expand the content of the Deaf stream.

AlphaPlus will produce a report on the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of developing CD ROM-based resources as an alternative to paper-based materials.

The project will also result in the creation of a software model using a split screen with video, text and a table of contents in a format accessible for Deaf and hearing learners that can be used for future resource that can be used for future resource and curriculum development. Five means of evaluation will be used to measure the project's effectiveness: statistics,

user feedback, staff feedback, monthly reports and regular meetings with funders and stakeholders.

Mr. Raymond Cohen
CANADIAN ABILITIES FOUNDATION
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Toronto, ON M6G 1A5
Tel. (416) 923-1885

The Geography of Canadian Literacy and Disability
The Canadian Abilities Foundation has put together a partnership of other disability organizations, literacy service providers, academic research institutions, Office of Disability Issues (ODI) and NLS program staff from HRDC, other federal departments/agencies and their counterparts in the United States, to initiate the application of GIS (geographic information system) to literacy and disability research in Canada.

GIS is an integrated system of computer hardware, software and trained personnel that geographically links (creates a series of maps) topographic, demographic, utility, facility and other resource data.

This innovative application will be demonstrated through maps showing the geographic distribution of people with disabilities, the population by different literacy skills, and the current opportunity of the two groups to access the services in their communities that offer to improve their literacy skills. The project team will use the best available data from Statistics Canada, but it will create template software to update the mapping process as soon as new data and databases become available.

This work offers new tools for use with Social Union Framework Agreement discussions and the skills agenda.

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Contact:
Susan Forrester, Project Manager,
Tel. 613 563-2581, ext. 14
E-mail: projects@cailc.ca

Making Connections: A Two-year, Comprehensive Cross-Disability Literacy Issues Strategy

This initiative is the product of a comprehensive national consultation involving key literacy and disability organizations in the voluntary sector as well as provinces/territories and applicable program areas in Human Resources Development Canada. The resulting proposal from the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC) involves a wide consortium of stakeholders who have described their supporting role as partners in letters of commitment.

The project is based on a sound plan to make the widest possible audience aware of the major literacy issues facing people with disabilities in every part of the country. The inclusive, community-based design is based on the principles of consumer control and learner involvement. All work conducted by project partners, including the environmental scan, literacy action tool-kit design, the literacy provider survey and the accessibility/barrier free design template, will be added to and promoted on the CAILC and National Adult Literacy Database web sites.

An on-line workshop will be provided to help literacy and disability organizations use these new learning materials and opportunities.

This project includes:

"Needs assessment of literacy programming for Canadians with a disability,"
Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres & National Adult Literacy Database Survey, Spring-Fall 2002.

The survey is currently available on line at
http://www.nald.ca/CAILCliteracysurvey/

In its letter of introduction to the survey, Walters and NALD Executive Director Charles Ramsey indicate: "as you are aware alarming rates of low literacy still plague Canadian society in the new millennium, including the disabled community. Despite significant advances in technology, new learning tools, and improved literacy rates for the overall population, research shows that disabled people lag far behind the general population on their journey toward literacy."

Supported by funding from the National Literacy Secretariat, the two organizations have come together to respond to this situation, by beginning to build concrete tools to address gaps in service delivery for Canadians with a disability seeking literacy training.

The survey will assist CAILC and NALD in creating on-line resources for the organizations that need them. These resources will be available on the CAILC/NALD website, scheduled to be launched later this year.

According to the Project Coordinator, between 170 and 200 questionnaires have been distributed by CAILC by mail. The survey has also been made available through the NLS web site for on-line completion.

In the second year of the Project, the survey will be extended to more disability organizations.

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1-866-282-8041 (toll-free within Canada and US)
TTY: (204)784-3713 (in Winnipeg)
1-866-282-8041 (toll-free within Canada and US)
Fax: (204) 975-3073
E-mail: info@smd.mb.ca

The Society is surveying the literacy field about accessibility for individuals with disabilities re:

- How individuals are accommodated in these programs

- Gaps in Knowledge and Supports

- Training needs of literacy institutions

- Conducting a literature review

- Partnership effort with The Canadian Centre on Disability Studies.

Literacy and Disability in Manitoba
The Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD) plans to review adult literacy programs in Manitoba regarding accessibility of those programs to individuals with disabilities. Information concerning physical accommodations, gaps in knowledge and supports, and the training needs of

literacy instructors regarding working with individuals with disabilities will be gathered in this analysis.

A literature review will also be undertaken to look at literacy, adult education, disability, technological innovation and health information provision. SMD will develop and distribute a survey instrument to provincially funded literacy programs in Manitoba to seek information regarding access to programs for individuals with disabilities, supports already in place, further supports required, and training needs of the staff. From the needs assessment, disability training materials will be developed for the literacy programs.

Other outcomes include: a publication of research findings on the web, a listing of provincial literacy programs where there is access and capacity to accommodate individuals with disabilities, the establishment of an advisory group comprised of people with disabilities and literacy needs, and recommendations for the next steps in addressing gaps in service.

The project's effectiveness will be evaluated by fulfilling the outlined objectives and by determining whether SMD would be in a position to provide assessment and referral services regarding literacy and disability.

Ms. Louise Ford
OTTAWA DEAF CENTRE
310 Elmgrove Avenue
Ottawa, ON K1Z 6V1
Tel: (613) 729-1467

Managing Multi-Level Groups in a Deaf Literacy Program
The Ottawa Deaf Centre wants to develop a resource kit for Deaf Literacy practitioners to help them manage multi-level groups of learners. The kit will include sample teaching units, tools, techniques, lesson plans and templates for developing new materials, all of which will be produced in print format and on CD ROM. The Ottawa Deaf Centre will first survey Deaf Literacy practitioners to determine their needs as well as successful techniques for working with multi-level classes of learners.

They will also research and review resources currently available in the field and develop the kit based on this as well as results of the survey. A training session on using the materials will be offered at the Goal: Ontario Literacy for the Deaf Spring Workshop. The kit will also be distributed to all Deaf/Deaf-Blind Literacy programs in Ontario and to AlphaPlus Centre.

To evaluate the project's success, the Ottawa Deaf Centre will survey Deaf Literacy practitioners on the usefulness of the resource kit.

Mr. Denis Bourrier
ST AMANT CENTRE INC.
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Tel: (204) 256-4301
Fax: 204 257-4349
E-mail: giving@stamant.mb.ca

Marcia Labiuk, Literacy Project Coordinator
Tel: 204 256 4301 Ext. 336

The National Literacy Secretariat has funded the St. Amant Centre:

- To examine ways to expand adult literacy programs to community clients.

- To provide a Coordinator to consult with agencies who provide services for the developmentally disabled to determine the appropriate structure of programs and how best to meet their literacy needs.

Community Adult Literacy Project
This Project is developing the structure and resources needed to extend the current in-house adult literacy program at the centre to community clients with similar disabilities and needs. The aim and purpose of the projects are:

- to develop the community capacity to recognize and address the need for literacy education for persons with developmental disabilities.

- to create a mailing list of potential users and/ or referring agencies, and an overview of materials and literature available. This will result in the development of a service ready site, and support document for a future public information campaign.

The Canadian Centre on Disability Studies:

56 The Promenade
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 3H9
Tel: (204) 287-8411
Fax: (204) 284-5343
TTY: (204) 475-6223
E-mail: ccds@disabilitystudies.ca

Disability Community Capacity: A Framework for Preliminary Assessment:
This study is developing a framework for assessing disability community capacity in Canada. Human Resources Development Canada (Social Policy Development) is the funder. A report will be published in May 2002. For further information, contact CCDS Research Associate Colleen Watters (6) .

Disability and Literacy:

This project is examining the literacy issues of persons with disabilities. The National Literacy Secretariat is the funder. A report will be published in September 2002. For further information, contact Project Manager Rhonda Wiebe (Tel: 204 287 8411).

Organizational Profile:

Disability Studies emanates from and supports the disability rights, independent and community living movements that emerged in the 1970's and 1980's. Disability Studies is interdisciplinary and defines disability not as a biological or objective issue, but as a social phenomenon. Disability Studies examines and critiques "elements" in the external world that create or produce, and sustain or perpetuate negative images of disability.

The establishment of the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies has its roots in Canadian disability organizations, community groups and representatives from different faculties at the University of Manitoba. The focus of discussion was the development of a national centre to address emerging disability research and disability studies curriculum issues.

A collaborative effort between the community, University of Manitoba and the Government of Canada led to the establishment of an Endowment Fund to make the Centre a reality. The CCDS was incorporated in 1995.

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6 HRDC has indicated that information in report is, to date, for internal use only.

Other Programs and Activities of Interest

A number of other programs, projects, or activities were located during the course of Project research that may be helpful as well. These include:

- **Ontario Cultural Society of the Deaf:**

The OCSD is currently involved with writing a program proposal for George Brown College. This program is expected to be established in the fall of 2003.

- **"A portrait of persons with disabilities"**
  by Michael Bergob,
  Statistics Canada Catalogue 89-542-XPE
  Feb. 21/95

This study profiles the 4.2 million Canadians who reported disabilities in 1991. It looks at their population characteristics, family status, education, labour force participation, income, transportation and activity patterns. The information is mainly from the 1991 Post-census Health and Activity Limitation Survey.

It includes analysis of previously published material from sources such as *"Adults with disabilities: their employment and education characteristics" (82-554-XPB June 1993) and "Selected characteristics of persons with disabilities"* (82-555-XPB November 1994). Also included are a number of previously unreleased series describing Canadians with disabilities. The study may be purchased from Statistics Canada.

- **Ontario Literacy Survey of the Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing**

The objective of the survey is to assess the literacy levels of deaf and hard of hearing adults living in Ontario households. The survey identifies needs for continuing education programs and services and provides information to support current programs and to request further financing.

The survey was funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. Besides the sponsor, Goal Ontario Literacy for Deaf Adults (GOLD)

participated in the development of the survey representing the interests of the community of hearing impaired.

- **The Community Social Data Strategy**

"In collaboration with Statistics Canada and with financial support from HRDC, the CCSD (Canadian Council on Social Development) prepared The Community Social Data Strategy (PDF).

When fully developed it will provide a gateway for municipalities and community-based organizations to access data from Statistics Canada in order to identify and better understand the social and economic trends within their individual communities.

There are many organizations that could benefit by having immediate access to social data, but they are not aware of what's available or how to gain access. Data are expensive and the funds required to purchase data are often scarce. Equally scarce are trained personnel who can analyze and process the data for use by their organizations or municipalities."

- **A Best Practices On-Line Resource Library**

Participation House - London and Area
633 Colborne Street,
London, ON
N6B 2V3
Tel.: 519 660-6635
Fax: 519 660-1654
E-mail: info@participationhouse.com
Web Site: http://www.dspolicyfind.ca

Developmental Services "Policy Find"

In July 2001. HRDC funded a project to supply the human services field with an on-line library, providing easy access to information regarding the best practices and provincial standards for policies and procedures in the non-profit sector. The Project is hosted by Participation House Support Services and was initiated by Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs (OASIS). The information was compiled creating a database of the best practices and procedures for agencies that support persons with disabilities. This database is available to both OASIS members and community partners. The project database will soon be available on CD as well as hard copy and can be accessed through the OASIS web-link or the Participation House London site.

Supports to Participate in Training

Partners in Employment's "Training" document outlines supports necessary for persons with disabilities to participate in training programs.

Supports can be classified in three groups:

- Technical aids and equipment
- Modifications to the training environment
- Human resources (supports and modifications to methods of instruction)

Supports are required for:

- Communication: speaking, hearing, writing, reading (determine how the individual prefers to communicate and accommodate that preference as much as possible.)
- Mobility
- Individual health considerations (e.g. stamina)

Specific Supports include:

Technical aids and equipment:

Deaf:

--visual signalling devices (for computers, alarms)
--TTY to communicate by phone-personal computer can be configured to function as a TTY, electronic mail also an alternative to voice phone.
--closed caption decoders

Hard of Hearing:

--assistive listening devices (such as FM systems and infrared systems, similar to FM systems, but transmit amplified sounds via infrared signals instead of audio.

Head Injury:

--speech synthesizers-a computer hardware device used in conjunction with software to convert the visual output of a computer monitor into synthesized speech output.

Learning Disability:

--dictaphones and tape recorders
--word processing software with spelling/grammar checks
--calculators and computers with synthesized speech output.

Physical Disability:

--speaker phone with memory for frequently used numbers
--or phone headsets
--amplified headsets; portable amplifier units for telephones
--robotic arms allow people to load diskettes, turn pages, answer phones
--reading stand

Computer:
--sequential keystroke input (alternative to depressing two or more keys at once)
--alternative keyboards and mice
--speech recognition systems allow the computer user to enter commands and make mouse movements verbally.
--foot rest to reduce back strain and improve circulation to legs and feet
--foam wrist rests to support wrists when using keyboard
--ergonomic chair
--Obus form

Visual Disability:

--portable Braille notetakers
--tactile reading aids convert printed letters into a vibrating tactile form which is read with the fingers.
--optical character recognition devices (OCRs) scan printed text and convert it into synthetic speech or a computer text file.
--tools with Braille markings
--closed circuit magnifying TV projects image of printed page on TV screen - user can adjust size.
--magnifiers (e.g. large button phone adapters, sheet magnifiers).

Computer:
--speech recognition systems
--speech synthesizers - a computer hardware device used in conjunction with software to convert the visual output of a computer monitor into synthesized speech output.
--Braille translation software
--large print software
--Braille input devices (enter in Braille into computer)
--Braille keyboard and software to configure it.
--adjustable document holder
--monitor arm
--large monitor

Note: Accessibility Options are standards with Windows '95 software. This feature allows for keyboard options, high contrast displays, use of numeric keyboard for mouse control and alternatives to audio signals.

Modifications to the Training Environment:

Deaf:

--add captioning to training videos

Developmental Disability:

--plain language

Hard of Hearing:

--remove sources of disruptive environmental noise-use sound absorbing barriers, well sealed doors.

Head injury:

--taped curriculum materials

Learning Disability:

--wall dividers, private space to reduce distractions

Physical Disability:

--ramps, accessible washrooms, automatic doors, wide doorways, wide parking spaces.

--adjustable desks, tables, and other work surfaces to accommodate wheelchairs.

Visual Disability:

--taped/Braille curriculum materials
--rearrange furniture & equipment to eliminate hazards

Human Supports and Accommodations

Deaf:

--sign language interpreters for group meetings and situations where precise communication is crucial.

Developmental Disability:

--job coach to train for specific job
--orient to transportation routes

Head injury:

--modified hours
--reading assistants for access to print material
--notetakers
--extended time for tests

Learning Disability:

--assignments and other important communications in writing/audio as required.
--reading assistants for access to print material
--extended time for tests

Physical Disability:

--modified hours
--learn at home (e.g. transportation, stamina reasons)
--personal attendant
--notetakers

Visual Disability:

--reading assistants,-notetakers
--orient to classrooms and transportation routes

BUILDING CAPACITY

Building individual capacity enables people to increase access to the information, skills, and networks that support their participation in communities and organizations.

Summary of Common Ground Workshop Findings

During Workshop sessions, participants broke into small groups for brainstorming on a number of topics. Bracketed numbers in the following charts indicate the number of groups making the comment.

1. **What does literacy mean to you?**	2. **Why do people want to be literate?**
…is a quality of life issue; affects independence and self-esteem **(4)**	…for information, comprehension, and functioning **(4)**
Communication and socialization: interaction and social acceptance **(4)**	…for access and empowerment **(4)**
….affects how people function in a world that demands literacy **(4)**.	…for job, training opportunities, further education **(4)**
Literacy programs should address each individual's learning needs **(4)**.	…for enjoyment, on-going learning
Lack of pace should not be confused with lack of progress.	…for less dependence on others/independence **(2)**
Literacy should be part of a life-long learning continuum.	…to enhance quality of life **(3)**
Employment not only "destination."**(3)**	…to better understand and have choices
Classrooms are not realistic for most Special Needs learners **(3)**.	…to become socially accepted **(3)**
Privatized programs, too "pricey," and inappropriate (children in adult prog.)	…to be able to function in daily life **(4)**
	…to belong, have self-esteem, valued contributor to society…to express self **(4)**

3. What are the barriers to clients?	4. What are the solutions?
Eligibility criteria: government restrictions in numbers, time frames for learning/lack of flexibility **(4)**	Educate community and government at all levels: need for more funding, showing costs to the system, society, if person is not in program; encourage participants to advocate needs; Ministries should dialogue amongst themselves **(4)**
Reduced or targeted funding **(3)**	
Format: lack of one to one **(4)**	
Confusion between pre-employment training and literacy	Agencies need to network with each other; with libraries, others **(4)**
Different Learning Styles	Developing ideas, proposals, partnerships important; working together to create new service delivery model to meet current and future needs **(3)**
Financial Barriers (testing)	
Accessibility/Transportation/ Childcare **(4)**	
Behaviours and Attitudes: employers, self, family **(4)**	Working with participants, to ensure that one to one service is provided **(3):**
Lack of information about services **(3)**	- Basic needs are met first (housing, finances, etc.)
Lack of motivation; attention span **(4)**	
Learning disabilities (undiagnosed)	- Training plan focuses on life skills and prioritises activities
Health, physical, and psychological **(4)**	- On-going Counselling is provided
No early identification, intervention	- Appropriate assessment, support services and assistive devices are found
Lack of training, professional development for workers **(3)**	
Communication, language barriers, non-verbal	- Common Assessment is used
	Resource sharing between agencies **(4)**
Language within field, i.e. ESL	
Medical issues **(2)**	Need "sure fire" ways to advertise Communication with employers re staff training, use of inclusive language **(2)**

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Special Needs Community Advisory Group

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Taking the Next Steps Workshop Findings

London area Special Needs organizations and community partners gathered for a second round table discussion in early July to receive an update on Project activities, discuss the following issues, and determine the next steps.

How can we promote increased accessibility?	What can be done to establish and maintain alliances?
1. Coordinated Planning, including: --Developing a Special Needs community literacy plan, through various small and large group meetings, including annual or semi-annual community round tables, facilitated by LLSC. Plan would include: a. Material about community resources and specialized programs, services. b. Identify unmet needs and gaps. c. Advocate for programs and suggest ways to meet these needs. d. Encourage public and decision-makers be informed to promote improvement of accessibility of buildings, facilities, and services. e. Address attendant care services. --Tabling Special Needs LCP (Literacy community plan) in mainstream literacy planning activities, incl. Project Report --Joint social marketing and outreach efforts to the general public through the media, talking to groups. 2. Increased assessment opportunities 3. Appropriate referrals to community literacy programs. 4. Clarification of eligibility criteria 5. Auditing of literacy programs so that community agencies know what programming is available, gaps identified, duplication addressed. 6. Emphasis on year-round services. 7. Explore possible linkages between SN group, LLSC, Local Training Board, LMLMPC, Network to Learning etc. (assists other categories as well)	1. Create group Special Needs website or add section to existing website. 2. Work with other organizations that promote or are actively engaged in literacy, such as libraries. 3. Catalog other resources and trained volunteers. 4. Lobby government for more literacy programs and advocate on behalf of best community programs and practices. 5. Gain broader understanding of current partnerships in community; create dialog to enhance existing collaborative efforts; explore partnerships, including Network to Learning. 6. Explore potential for new pilot programs and/or enhancement of regular programming: --potential HRDC, MTCU pre-literacy pilot program. --add literacy module to existing programs, (Youth En Route etc.). --Transition HS to college programs: (approach Fanshawe); Literacy component in DSW program (St. Clair).

How can we use resources more effectively?	4. What can be done to provide or support volunteer and staff training?
1. Create inventory of resources and services (who offers what, numeracy, basics etc.); publish directory of services or enhance already existing directories. 2. Regularly Link agencies involved with consultations; those at these meetings 3. Use e-mail and electronic information sharing (website linkages, chat rooms, e-mail groups, discussions) to keep people informed, share ideas. 4. Continue outreach efforts to connect with and inform the broader community. 5. Hold round tables, focus group meetings twice a year. 6. Look for new partners to bring additional resources and $ (Industrial Accident Prevention Association, Unions, Industry, School Boards, Health Units, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Partners in Leisure, Libraries, etc.), groups with broad understanding of necessity of life skills; quality of life issues. 7. Support and find ways to fund workplace programs and identify learning issues there. 8. Find additional volunteers and resources in college and university programs. 9. Develop communications materials and locate and distribute funding opportunities, training materials. 10. Bring resources to rural communities, find ways to introduce to homes; enhance information in HRDC kiosks about literacy issues.	1. Promote information-sharing: Hold a "trade" show, bringing SN organization administrators and front-line workers together to talk about what each agency or group does; possibly include public. 2. Identify and pursue mutual professional development opportunities. 3. Recruit more volunteer tutors, specialized volunteers, link volunteers working in other organizations, volunteer groups; create specialized volunteer inventory; provide specialized training including Adult Learning Principles and recognition for work with SN populations; significant community planning issue. 4. Special Needs Website location would include support worker contact information for individuals requiring assistance in accessing or understanding materials. 5. Locate base funding to support training opportunities: hold SN professional development round table, invite funders to participate.

How can LLSC work with group?	Observations, Discussion Points:
As a networking organization, LLSC is positioned well to facilitate community development. 1. Model Development: Will continue to develop use of community round table model to gather, share information, address issues, gaps in service, and provide information. 2. Community Planning: Will work with group to bring SN community planning to LCP table. 3. Information sharing: Will add information to SN section of website, including events, professional development opportunities, services inventory and linkages from Project & new project; potential newsletter. 4. Professional Development: Will offer professional development training to agencies (Literacy Sensitivity Audit; how information is conveyed to persons with disabilities) and individuals (Clear Writing workshops); opportunities offered on a cost sharing, train-the-trainer basis. 5. Tutor training: LLSC willing to explore providing literacy tutor training for SN volunteers, if no one else is providing service; developing some type of recognition/certificate. 6. Additional Resources: EMO Local Training Board has offered support toward networking meetings; literacy information enhanced in latest Environmental Scan; groups included interested in literacy. 7. Co-ordination: Will explore funding for staff person to link with SN group to work on suggested list of activities. 8. Advisory Group to review Project, comments to be included in Report.	Round Table Model was well received. 1. Small group facilitators and recorders necessary to ensure all at tables are heard and information is recorded accurately. 2. Group likes the idea of a working group carrying on larger group efforts and reporting back for validation and further discussion regularly. H/e: Discussion about whether to build a larger group in order to begin vs. beginning with a small group and ensuring continued outreach and inclusion. 3. Agencies cannot devote significant time to community development but want to be included and represented. 4. Necessary to break professionals out of specific SN silos and broader SN silos into mainstream. Also: Interest in multi-disciplinary community development both in planning efforts and community networking opportunities. 5. Community Resource Development extremely important; providing information services and resource materials, having Best Practice materials available locally; Executive Summary of these materials prepared for review necessary; facilitating collaborative social planning. 6. Best timing for round tables is mid-fall and mid-spring 7. Effort to reach out to more agencies, particularly mental health groups, extremely important. 8. Ensure Report is circulated both to SN organizations, to partners, and in ways accessible to the public.

Summary of Findings Highlights from Focus Group

The Project Coordinator updated members of the Grand Erie Training and Adjustment Board's Haldimand Norfolk Employment Needs & Issues Committee for Persons With Disabilities at the Committee's July 3rd meeting in Simcoe. In addition to updating the committee on Project activities and issues already documented during earlier community round tables and interviews, the Coordinator answered questions about the electronic survey already circulated to members of the committee, a similar service provider committee in Brant, and other Special Needs Organizations. Committee members were then given an opportunity to respond to the following questions and issues:

1. What does literacy mean to you?	2. Why do people want to be literate?
…the ability to be safe in the community and be able to function at home and in the neighbourhood…to know where you are going. …the ability to be able to improve a person's life style, through upgrading, education, training, and securing employment…basic reading, writing, math…in order to be able to function in life…survival skills and self-esteem…read and write and have more confidence. …there are a number of definitions: functional literacy and then life standards. …the need to include individuals with a criminal history; many have literacy problems, learning disabilities. …the ability to understand labels: household cleaners; access to washrooms. …must include computer literacy, since it is hard to function in today's world without computers. …hard to understand government language in information, support documents.	…for self-esteem. …so people realize what they are missing out on… …for job opportunities. …for family relationships. ….because literacy is a basic requirement for communicating…for basic writing skills. …society requires literacy. …for reading and interpretation. …as world becomes more automated literacy skills are being demanded. …in order to run a household…running a household is like running a business. …so that people don't get ripped off; fraud is bigger problem with SN…even members of peer group take advantage of those with lesser skills.

3. What are the barriers to clients?	4. What are the solutions?
• Physical (mobility, accessibility, transportation). • Communication (verbal, need for Sign and adaptive equipment) • Lack of basic support in literacy programs (that persons with disabilities are welcome; able to work at own pace, etc.) • That *dis*-ability is seen as an over-riding issue, not that the person has abilities. • Funding issues; who pays for service for Special Needs • Process may take longer; that specialized equipment is needed or individualized training. • Barrier may even be what (limited) services are available. • Services may be limited to helping to survive, such things as home care, supports, but not literacy. • Fear of not being able to participate is for the Special Needs learner itself a barrier. • Community programs do not always look for ways to promote programming to people who cannot read. Question needs to be asked, "Where Did you hear about this program? • Bad experience in classroom setting in school for many persons with disabilities. • "We haven't figured out how to reach out to persons with disabilities. "We need to focus on ways to reach Special Needs." • SN people are lost at a young age. • Literacy takes a long time; reaching standards requires a lot of time, sometimes five years or longer. • Dollars need to be put into early literacy programs, such as what happens in Australia. • Need to work closer with H-N Literacy Council.	• Closer working relationships with Literacy Councils and Networks. • Bridges with Connections to Work. • Need to ask people from other organizations, groups, and funders to sit on literacy councils in order to better understand gaps in service. • More holistic programming, funding focus on such programs; funding for early years, before people fall through the cracks. • Programming focus that goes to the people, not expecting people to come to the program. • Encouragement and use of "local champions," who have been through the system and can talk to others to offer encouragement and support. • Get the message across that not being able to read and write does not mean that a person is stupid. • Passport approach needs to include information (including literacy) that is specific to the job. • Flexibility is necessary in how services are delivered. • Understanding of mental health cycles. • Necessary to give people ownership of their own skills, including literacy. • A number of successful local programs: …Association for Community Living transitional youth program…Partnership with School Board, with programming offered in school boards and community centres…St. Andrew's Church, in Brantford, drop-in centre, originally youth focused, now more adults. • H-N does not have large number of services; rural issues predominate. • Group found discussion about Special Needs literacy issues helpful in preparation for committee strategic planning process. • Literacy will be on Fall Community Round Table Agenda for Local Board.

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Special Needs Service Provider Survey

Surveys distributed electronically to Brant, Elgin, Haldimand, Middlesex, Norfolk, and Oxford County Special Needs service providers and London Groups supported earlier Workshop findings about service delivery gaps and issues.

Many organizations spoke about a lack of programs, one-to-one assistance and assistive devices and limited space in classes. Challenges most often noted included: financial and personal issues, lack of information about programs, lack of assistive devices, social attitudes, and limited numbers of trained volunteers.

Recommended actions included more cooperative programming with community-based service providers who do not have expertise to deliver literacy programs; more rural programs; sharing of resources, more programming for the deaf population; more programs geared to quality of life and skills maintenance. The need for literacy sensitivity audits, in-home computer services, and in-house assessments were also mentioned.

One organization said that "Lifelong learning seems to be a term that is accepted only for individuals who do not face barriers to learning. Creating an environment where small gains can be acknowledged and long-term learning plans are supported would provide individuals with barriers greater opportunities to explore and expand their potential."

Special Needs organizations might become more fully engaged focused on literacy, by working "together to define future directions"; creating and enhancing programming through partnership, collaboration, and resource-sharing; creating a higher profile for literacy: working with and supporting small numbers of learners as they work to achieve their literacy goals more independently; and being a resource to Community Education Programs.

A service delivery model should be collaborative, individualized, and flexible, survey participants said. Educational Assistants should be included in Adult Learning Programs. Finally, a network was extremely important not only to address client needs and many agencies' sense of isolation, but also to resolve Special Needs group lack of access to community literacy planning efforts to date. Such a network would help both Special Needs groups and the community as well.

Survey results are part of the LLSC Resource Compilation. For more information, contact LLSC.

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140 Forest St. E.
Dunnville, ON N1A 1C1
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Final Steps in Transition to New Activities

The Advisory Group met in mid-July to review findings from the Next Steps Workshop and to determine steps necessary over the summer.

Advisory Group Final Meeting Discussion Points	Advisory Group Decisions, Action Planning Points
1. Members of the Advisory Group were updated briefly on final activities of the Special Needs Project, following the last Community Round Table Workshop. 2. Members then discussed other Special Needs networking and planning groups in the London area and their terms of reference (Partners in Employment, Partners in Leisure, and the Middlesex County Networking Group). 3. Group decided that next steps in Proposed Special Needs networking activities should include developing a partnering bridge between these groups. 4. For example, a "Partners in Literacy" special needs network, unlike these other groups, would have a primary focus on literacy, and might offer literacy sensitivity audits and Plain language workshops to these other partnering groups. 5. Since Partners in Literacy might Use LLSC's six-county catchment area, this group would naturally extend partnership activities to one (Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford) or two (EMO and Brant, Haldimand, and Norfolk) areas, covering both rural and urban issues.	1. Decision to start with an action cluster of service provider organizations involved in the Special Needs Networking Project. 2. Organize and initiate continued outreach to other organizations. 3. Provide PIE and PIL (plus potentially others) with quarterly update of information and activities. 4. LLSC/Partners in Literacy can provide literacy awareness/sensitivity training making access to services easier for persons with disabilities. 5. Partners in Literacy Core Group would develop a work plan with agreement to meet for one year to look at what interests needed to be explored; what actions needed to be taken; how to evaluate these activities; and how to achieve "community buy-in." • Work plan would include such things as networking, literacy planning, information and resource sharing and professional development. 6. Next Steps proposed: • Representation on Community Planning Group. • Professional Development opportunities, including Literacy Sensitivity Audits and Clear Writing Workshops

6. LLSC might facilitate other training workshops (including train the trainer) two to three times a year, at times providing the training and at other times bringing in other specialists.
7. Possibility for partnerships to bring in other resources, from such places as Community Literacy Ontario, Laubach, Frontier College,
8. Discussions need to take place between LLSC and SN initiating group about how to share information and resources.

- LLSC can provide some materials for professional development, other resources; initial database of information from Project; a quarterly report.
- Manual for SN Tutors necessary.
- Literacy Assessments, tools, necessary; possibly an assessment service "on wheels," with 2 or 3 people skilled in assessments, both in Employment stream (possibly ATN) and non-employment stream, with potential for contracted hourly rate cost-sharing arrangements between organizations; potential for initial assessment of 20 persons, with a waiting list.
- Discussion point: how to fund this direct service which has been identified as a critical gap in service.
- Discussion point: we need to look at what are best methods of assessment; what works; what doesn't; potential for training workshops; best practices.
- Discussion point: What about service clubs, such as Rotary to fund such activities.

- Website information and training (LLSC), with potential for providing volunteer training materials for persons working with Special Needs groups, with potential funding from National Literacy Secretariat.
- Orientation Package for Tutors, Staff, including such things as adult learning principles.

7. Direct contact would also be made with organizations providing literacy services to provide "direct feed" of information; ongoing consultations,
8. Discussion point: A Special Needs designate from each county attend community-planning activities once or twice a year.
9. Potential to approach both MTCU and MCSS (new name) to support identification of existing resources and further development of assessment tools and process.
10. Work plan would identify need for assessments; ways to provide literacy assessments for life skills, quality of life, and employment potential.
11. Potential to also build in tutor training as part of this process; integrate assessment and tutor training skills.
12. Work plan would have to develop comprehensive list of literacy services provided by Special Needs organizations and/or partners; Special Needs clients.

- Discussion point: Approach MTCU to support building of an assessment process to more accurately assess Special Needs clients to move people into both employment and non-employment streams.
- Discussion point: Would Advisory Group continue following completion of Networking Project?
- Discussion Point: Further discuss impact of reduction in funding dollars over last three years in area.
- Need to develop Open Door Policy, with access to programming for clients who may be eligible and appropriate, similar to the Dunnville program.

9. Group to meet on September 6th at LLSC from 9:30-11 A.M. to discuss:

- Strategy for September 19th meeting (LCP)
- Proposal
- Planning an Information-Sharing Workshop
- Discussing Community Forum and Professional Development opportunities
- Workshops such as Clear Writing, etc.)
- Process necessary to coordinate efforts, proposals, projects; gathering letters of support.

13. Work plan would address eligibility as key issue.
14. Sustainability would also be addressed.
15. Draft work plan would be shared with other SN organizations, Local Training Boards.
16. Advisory or Working Group would ask for small "piece" of Community Planning agenda on September 19th to clearly identify what is being asked for, (pilot project with interim funding, potentially from "clawback" money, and to table SN Networking Project Report as resource document.
17. Group agreed to meet for one to two more times to develop strategy for September 19th session and to brainstorm proposal.
18. Group would like to meet with LBS consultant, Laura Hamilton, to ask her to field questions.
19. Group would like to potentially approach local politicians to discuss issues in a positive, constructive way; would like plan to go to the Minister's Table.
20. Ways to coordinate proposals and projects; how to gather letters of support still need to be determined.

CONNECTIONS

Connecting to Literacy

ABC Canada has collaborated with the publisher of the Yellow Pages™ and literacy agencies to provide telephone numbers for organizations that offer detailed information on the literacy programming available in your community.

Alpha Plus Centre or **AlphaPlus Centre Literacy Library** To carry out research or to borrow resources and learning materials related to adult literacy, contact:

Tel.: 1-800-788-1120 or 416-322-1012
Fax: 1-800-788-1417 or 416-322-0780
TDD: 1-800-788-1912 or 416-322-5751

The **Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities** has a Training Hotline service to provide answers to questions about training, including the LBS Program, and telephone numbers of literacy agencies across the province.

Toll-free Training Hotline at 1-888-JOBGROW or 416-326-5656.

MTCU Mailing Address:
Literacy and Basic Skills Section
Workplace Preparation Branch
Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
900 Bay Street, 23rd Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2
Tel.: 416-326-5476
Fax: 416-326-5505
TDD: 416-326-5493
E-mail: frances.mackey@edu.gov.on.ca

Four umbrella organizations in Ontario support diverse literacy initiatives:

Anglophone:

Ontario Literacy Coalition,
1003-365 Bloor Street East,
Toronto, ON M4W 3L4
Tel.: 416-963-5787
E-mail: ontlitco@interlog.com

Deaf:

GOLD (Goal: Ontario Literacy for Deaf People),
Suite 106-150 Central Park Drive,
Brampton, ON L6T 2T9,
Tel: 905 458-0286
TDD: 905-458-0499
E-mail: krockwell@deafliteracy.ca

Francophone:

La Coalition francophone pour l'alphabetisation et la formation de base en Ontario
235, chemin Montreal, piece 201,
Vanier, ON K1L 6C7
Tel.: 613-842-5369
e-mail: coalition@sympatico.ca

Native:

Ontario Native Literacy Coalition
111-1101 2nd Avenue East,
Owen Sound, ON N4K 2J1
Tel.: 519-371-5594
E-mail: onlc@on.aibn.com

Four sectoral bodies in Ontario support distinctive approaches to literacy delivery:

- Colleges: **ACAATO LBS College Sector Committee**
  Tel: 705566-8101, ext. 7529
- Community agencies: **Community Literacy of Ontario**,
  Tel: 705 733-2312
- Laubach: **Laubach Literacy of Ontario**,
  Tel: 519 743-3309
- School boards: **CESBA Literacy Committee**,
  Tel: 905 949-0049, ext. 2373

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The following resources are available from AlphaPlus:

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G. Allan Roeher Institute, *On Target?: Canada's Employment-Related Programs for People with Disabilities*. North York, Ontario, G. Allan Roeher Institute, 1993.

G. Allan Roeher Institute, *Literacy in Motion: A Guide to Inclusive Literacy Education*. North York, Ontario, G. Allan Roeher Institute, 1994.

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G. Allan Roeher Institute, *Speaking of Equality: A Guide to Choosing an Inclusive Literacy Program for People With an Intellectual Disability, Their Families, Friends and Support Workers*. North York, Ontario, G. Allan Roeher Institute, 1995.

G. Allan Roeher Institute, *The Right to Have a Job: A Straightforward Guide to Canada's Employment-Related Programs for Persons with Disabilities*. North York, Ontario, G. Allan Roeher Institute, 1994.

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Worrell, Bill, *Advice for Advisors.* Downsview, Ontario, National People First Project, 1988.

Some Key Resource Contacts or Materials

Canadian Centre on Disability Studies - http://www.disabilitystudies.ca/

Development of ABE/Literacy in Canada - A chronology of literacy in Canada from 1899 to present.

The Directory of Canadian Adult Literacy Research in English - A directory of adult literacy research from 1994 including research in progress.

Disability Weblinks, http://www.disabilityweblinks.ca

DRM Guide to Disability Resources on the Internet - Guide suggests some things to look for when visiting unfamiliar sites: What is the site's attitude toward people with disabilities? Disability-related sites should respect the individuality of visitors, and offer information that readers can use to make their own choices. Who sponsors or funds the site? Look for sites that are sponsored by government agencies, reputable commercially funded sites and personal home pages. Beware of potential conflicts of interest. Avoid sites that do not indicate a sponsor or funding source. Who wrote the information? Find out what the author's background and qualifications are. Be wary of sites that do not provide this information. Beware of sites with old information or no dates at all. See if there is an editorial board that includes independent experts.

Elgin, Middlesex Oxford Local Training Board: http://www.localboard.on.ca

Family Literacy Links - Visit our Family Literacy Day page for a listing of family literacy resources.

Grand Erie Training and Adjustment Board: http://www.getab.on.ca

Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians - HRDC and Industry Canada's mid-nineties report on Canada's innovation strategy

National Adult Literacy Database - A Canadian database with discussion groups and a database of literacy programs in Canada

National Institute For Literacy - An American site serving as a resource for the literacy community, assisting in addressing urgent national priorities

The National Literacy Secretariat - The federal government funding and policy body for literacy housed in Human Resources Development Canada

Office for Disability Issues - (http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca /hrib/sdd-dds/odi/content/about.shtml) ODI advances the Government of Canada's agenda to collaborate with partners. The goal is to remove barriers and to improve the social and economic inclusion of Canadians with disabilities by improving the knowledge and understanding of disability issues; improving policy and program coherence; encouraging innovation through pilots/demonstrations of access and inclusion; and broadening partnerships and engagement.

Roeher Institute: Integrated Network of Disability: http://www.roeher.ca

Statistics Canada: http://www.statcan.ca

Workink - The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (www.workink.com) provides resources and information to enhance the equitable and meaningful employment of people with disabilities.

World Association of Persons with DisAbilities (http://www.wapd.org).

Yahoo Clubs or Chat rooms - (clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/disabledCanadians) - a place to meet to discuss issues.