

PEI Literacy Alliance Environmental Scan

March 3, 2010

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1) Introduction

To prepare this environmental scan we used observation, reflection and discussion to gather our information. We define LES experts as those who are aware of the essential skills framework and use it in their work.

In February the PEI Literacy Alliance hosted a roundtable discussion with Island professionals who are LES experts. Attending the meeting were representatives from:

- Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning
- Apprenticeship Division
- Trade Essentials
- Workplace Learning PEI Inc.
- Amalgamated Dairies Ltd.
- Trout River Industries
- Holland College
- Adult and Basic Education
- PEI Literacy Alliance

We will analyse the information gathered to help guide our planning for the future.

Please note: Comments in italics come from the roundtable meeting held in February.

2) Understanding LES in PEI

We found a general lack of understanding of the LES framework designed by HRSDC. However, people may not know to call them LES but use other terms.

Knowing the framework helps. By putting names on the skills, you can identify the gaps.

-- Workplace Learning instructor

“You may know that someone has low literacy skills but don’t realize that they specifically struggle with document use for example.”

--PEI Government official

Most Grade 12 graduates are not aware of LES and/or don’t understand how they apply to their life. This is because in PEI high schools, students are learning essential skills out of context.

“1/3 of people become disengaged in school and learn to cheat the system to get by...they may graduate with grade 12 but are really at a grade 9 level. Perhaps the school system has cheated them?”

--Holland College official

More immigrants are coming to PEI, increasing the demand for LES training, and changing the face of the PEI community and workplace.

Over the last five years, many unskilled workers migrated to Alberta. With the slowdown of the oil patch many are returning home, increasing the number of people here with low LES.

There is increased enrolment at Holland College in math and science high school credit courses this year. Increased government funding has made more seats available and there is still a waiting list.

“The enrolment numbers at Holland College are high this year. Not sure what is driving it. Demand is heavy in math and science and usually you don’t do these courses unless you have a larger plan for your education.”

-- Holland College official

3) LES Challenges in PEI

In gathering information for this review we identified the following challenges:

Lack of knowledge of ES

“Others are using and teaching LES without using the formal HRSDC framework, even though it’s a very good framework to use, especially for assessments.”

-- PEI government official

Lack of time

Employers think they can’t afford the time for employee training.

“It is the best way to invest money. You can have employees that want to but if the employer doesn’t buy in, it isn’t going to happen”

--Trout River Industries Human Resources manager.

Lack of employer buy-in

“The CEO wants to see that their investment will have a direct effect on the bottom line or they are not going to see the importance of ES training.”

--Workplace Learning instructor

Lack of basic ES training

“We had an Aerospace company who wanted a customized course to teach employees how to operate a machine, that’s it. ‘Keep it to one month not two.’ After the training the company came back and essentially said ‘they can run the machine, now can you teach them how to think?’ meaning teach them ES. An ES program must be relevant to employer and employee.”

-- Community College Official

Changes in School System

In September 2010 kindergarten-aged children will move to the public school system. As a result many trained early childhood educators from the daycare system are moving with them. This will create a lack of trained early childhood educators in the day care facilities across the Island. As well the government subsidy that was available to support kindergarten training in child care centres will be lost. These factors will force nearly half of the early childhood centres in PEI to close, putting an added burden on working parents and employers. Another fall-out from this move will be that quality pre-LES training for children will be lost in the rural communities.

Employment Directions

The PEI Government is supporting hi-tech industries creating a need for specialized training. People without LES foundation skills won’t be able to take advantage of these employment opportunities.

In 2008 the PEI Government introduced its Prosperity Agenda. In brief, the major goals of the plan over the next five years include:

- A nationally recognized center of biotechnology excellence with 2,000 employees
- An information technology sector that will be recognized for its innovative capacity
- Continued cultivation of our thriving aerospace industry
- Increased emphasis on environmentally-friendly energy sources

4) What is missing in the field?

Our LES roundtable identified these gaps:

- We need ES assessments prior to taking other courses.
“A survey showed that 85% of 80 people said ES training would have helped them succeed at the apprentice training courses.”
-- Apprenticeship Division manager
- Learners need to upgrade their essential skills to be successful.
“ES are not basic skills – you must have a high level of some skills for certain jobs. A learner’s skills may be very good, but need to be better in order to succeed at that certain program or career.”
--PEI government official
- LES needs to be built into the school system.
“There are programs for people who are low achievers and high achievers. We need more for the majority in the middle.”
-- Amalgamated Dairies Workplace Instructor
- LES training for instructors is needed; they need to see the connections.
“Instructors need help getting their heads around ES. If they don’t see the connections, the learners definitely won’t. The instructors play a very important role in incorporating ES into what they teach. Everything that is taught must have ES taught throughout.”
-- PEI Government official
- Lack of promotion of on-line tools
“HRSDC has self assessment tools and tools for preparing for an exam. People don’t know about their tools because they don’t promote them”
-- PEI government official
- Buy-in from employers
“There is a lot of potential for workplace LES training but we need enthusiastic buy-in from employers who are willing to invest in their staff.”
-- PEILA staff

5) What are PEI's assets?

Our roundtable discussion identified the following assets in PEI:

In 2008 PEI had the highest percentage of the target population write and/or pass the General Educational Development GED test.

“Regarding GED – the PEI target population is something like 29,730 and going down. PEI has the highest rate of meeting the target population.”

--PEI government official

GED	
2008 – 324 tested	194 passed (60%)
2009 – 389 tested	232 passed (60%)

Family literacy grants - The grants are available to community groups who partner with schools or kindergartens to support literacy, numeracy and learning for the whole family. Due to the success of the program, funding has grown from \$15,000 in 2006-2007 to \$30,000 in 2007-2008 to \$50,000 in 2008-2009. The department recently approved funding for 24 new family literacy projects.

Eating between the Lines is an early literacy, healthy eating program for young children. It was developed and tested in child care facilities in Prince Edward Island. The web address is ebtl.org.

Best Start - The Best Start Program supports PEI families with children up to age three by showing the parents how to develop the child's potential to learn. Across the province, family resource centres and public health nursing are working together to make Best Start available in all health regions to all Island families. The program strives to help children enter school successfully and learn to cope with the challenges of life.

Public Library Service(PLS) – The Public Library Service provides an efficient and effective service to meet the needs of Islanders for information, education and recreation through the provision of access to library resources regardless of geographic location.

PLS Statistics
• 26 branches
• 525.5 open hours per week
• 109 employees
• 741,112 items borrowed last year
• 54,581 Islanders have cards
• 26,089 computer sessions
• 3,351 library programs

EAL at the Library – The library has developed an English as an Additional Language (EAL) tutor training program which has been used to train more than 140 volunteers. Through partnership with the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada, and a grant from the Population Secretariat, the library has been building upon the success of its tutor training program, training much-needed tutors in the Charlottetown area and expanding training outside of Charlottetown.

Workplace Learning PEI – was developed in 1997 to help workplaces keep pace with the rapid changes in today’s economy. A demanding and diverse workplace requires both employees and employers to engage in lifelong learning activities.

In 2009 Workplace Learning served approx 1025 clients across all the services they offer. This would include:

- Essential Skills Assessments
- Reading Assessments
- Organizational Needs Assessments
- Essential Skills Training
- Essential Skills Information Sessions
- Workplace Learning Information Sessions
- Developing Learning Plans
- GED Testing
- Professional Development for Adult Educators
- Computers for Communities Program
- Literacy/Essential Skills Consultation Services.

“Using ES allowed learners to identify what and why they need to learn a skill.”
-- Workplace Learning instructor

Trade Essentials(TE) is a program for people who are already working in a trade. It is designed to help them improve the Essential Skills they need in their workplace so they are better prepared to advance in their career. Trade Essentials can help identify the skills needed to stay at the top of their trade and offer training to help them develop those skills.

TE Statistics
• 125 clients served
• 7 trade categories
• 73 challengers for Red Seal
• 48 were successful

Holland College High School Transitions Program – is for high school students who have become disengaged in school. For half a semester they work in small groups and rotate through the programs at Holland College to explore careers. They talk with staff and teachers and present at the end of the program what they learned. They get a course credit for this.

“You can see the transformation – students are very shy and hang their heads at first, but by the end they are engaged.”

-- Holland College official

Holland College has a goal to expand this program to rural areas.

Holland College Adult Programs - The Adult and Community Education(ACE) division offers these courses to adults:

Level 1 and Level 2 – These levels help learners acquire, review and/or improve their reading, writing and math skills in order to take the GED preparation course or to enroll in high school credit courses.

Preparation for the GED Exam – the GED exam gives adults who have not graduated from high school the opportunity to earn a high-school equivalency diploma. The GED Preparatory class assists learners in preparing for the GED exam by providing a general review of basic academic skills and the opportunity to take practice tests. All students are required to complete a pre-GED Assessment. Subjects covered include: writing, social studies, science, literature and mathematics. The GED exam is administered by the Department of Education.

High school credits – learners can acquire high school credits or upgrade existing marks to meet the admission requirements for post-secondary institutions or to complete requirements for the PEI High School Graduation Certificate for Mature Students.

Language training programs:

ESL - English as a Second Language (student pays tuition)
EEELS - Enhanced Employability Essential Language Skills
LINC - Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (Citizenship & Immigration and Provincial Nominee Program pays tuition)

PEI Volunteers for Literacy - PEI Volunteers for Literacy promotes literacy as a positive and important lifetime habit. They work in elementary and intermediate schools as one-on-one reading helpers.

Since 2008 PEI Volunteers for Literacy has also been matching volunteer tutors with adults across PEI who want to improve their literacy. Trained tutors are working with a wide variety of learners. Those who are at the very beginning levels work on the basics of reading, writing, phonics, and spelling. Some learners are at a more advanced stage, and the tutors match the lessons with their requirements. Learners may work on academic credits or GED.

In 2009 PEI Volunteers for Literacy offered tutor training in Charlottetown, Tyne Valley and twice in Summerside.

ACE Enrolment
2007 - 2008
Levels - 50
GED – 255
Credits - 459
Total = 764
2008 - 2009
Levels 44
GED 242
Credits 495
Total = 781

Training numbers
2007 - 2008
ESL 76
EEELS 23
LINC 219
2008 - 2009
ESL 55
EEELS 27
LINC 308

PEI Vols activities
• 4 information sessions held
• 14 tutors trained
• 20 on-going matched pairs
• 13 new pairs matched
• 4 trained tutors waiting to be paired
• 9 volunteers waiting for training

Learning Disabilities Association of PEI - LDAPEI is a registered non-profit, member supported charitable organization. The organization provides programs and services for learning disabled Islanders, who often need help with reading and other essential skills.

PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada provides a wide variety of short-term settlement services and long-term social inclusion and community integration programs for immigrants. PEIANC is also involved in numerous cross-cultural awareness and public education programs.

PEIANC Clients	
1125	2008-09
1091	2007-08
857	2006-07

Over half of the newcomers are given language assessment tests and referred to one of two providers of language training: Holland College or Study Abroad Canada.

SkillsPEI is a division of the Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning. It was established to manage the delivery of training and skills development programming funded by the Canada-Prince Edward Island Labour Market Development Agreement and Labour Market Agreement. SkillsPEI will duplicate and expand upon programs and services previously delivered by Service Canada/Human Resources and Skills Development Canada in local offices located across Prince Edward Island.

6) What are the priorities for the PEI government?

Rural Development – The PEI government priority is higher levels of education and skill for Islanders. They have designed a new rural development strategy.

Among the new initiatives identified in the strategy is the establishment of three Rural Action Centres. These centres will act as a single source of information and resources for businesses, a community economic development investment fund and support for regional tourism associations. This may lead to more training opportunities in the rural areas.

Kindergarten Study - Kathleen Flanagan, an early childhood education consultant, is drafting the province's first plan for the children who will be left behind in daycares when kindergarten students move into the public school system this fall.

Her report will examine whether PEI should follow Ontario's lead and send four-year-olds to preschool. Other issues include whether daycares should follow a standard curriculum and if the government should subsidize wages for daycare workers.

7) What are the linkages between programs and agencies?

Prince Edward Island has the advantage of its small size. We are able to establish partnerships that benefit all players. This is a norm here and has proved effective over the years.

“The linkages in PEI are accessible and very important.”

--PEI government official

Here are examples of recent successful linkages:

Activity	Partners
PGI Golf Tournament for Literacy	Business, government, PEILA
Family Literacy Day	Department of Education and Early Child Development, Public Library Service, UPEI, PEIANC, Take 30, Kindermusick, PEILA
Summer Tutoring Program for Kids	Rotary Clubs, Department of Education, School Boards, Service Canada, Public Library Service, CanWest Raise-a-Reader, PEILA
Workplace Learning PEI Inc programs	Businesses, Labour unions, government, Holland College
Trade Essentials training	Apprentices, government, Holland College
Professional development workshops	PEILA, Holland College
PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada	PEI Public Library Service, Holland College, Study Abroad Canada
Bursary and scholarship programs	PEILA, UPEI and Holland College
Trout River 101	Workplace Learning, Trade Essentials, Trout River Industries

“After a Workplace Ed program learners may have more self confidence and be willing to go on to other learning opportunities at Holland College.”

-- Workplace Learning Instructor

8) Tools, programs and supports in PEI

Holland College – There is a new Holland College/Aboriginal community partnership to produce a high school transitions program that explores career opportunities in the aboriginal community.

As a response to the government’s rural development strategy, Holland College is opening a new centre on the west end of the Island.

Trout River Industries – This company dedicated an entire week to an Employee Development Program called “Trout River 101.” The goal of the program was “Employee Optimization”.

The week of activity was dedicated to the development of all employees. These were the components of the program:

- Attitude and Respect
- Working as a Team
- Understanding Flow and Waste
- Communication
- Understanding Personalities
- Role Models / Leadership
- Respect and Manners
- Essential Skills
- Change
- Having Fun
- Community Activities

“Everyone was required to take part, even the owners. On Monday some people wouldn’t lift their heads or make eye contact, by Friday these same people were excited to present in front of the whole group.”

The week promoted creating change to be more efficient – it worked and production levels have increased by 3 times.”

-- Trout River Industries Human Resources manager

PEI Literacy Alliance

Summer Tutoring Program for Kids is a free program to help children in grades 1 to 6 who have difficulties with reading, writing or math. Last year we hired 26 university students as tutors who worked with over 700 children.

“Igniting the Power Within” is a series of four workshops that trains adult educators in essential skills and portfolio development.

“Sharing Our Gifts” is a project to develop an essential skills portfolio for families based on the HRSDC model for the workplace.

Plain Language Editing and Workshops -- We use our expertise in plain language to help government and community organizations prepare public education materials to improve communication with all Islanders.

Family Literacy Day is an annual event that celebrates and promotes family literacy. Each year close to 300 children and their families participate.

PGI Golf Tournament for Literacy is a major fundraiser for the Alliance. We highlight literacy and essential skills and profile the success of adult learners at the event. The Alliance gives **bursaries and scholarships** to adult learners from funds raised at the Tournament. Each year ten \$500 bursaries and three \$1500 scholarships are awarded.

Raise-A-Reader Campaign is a public awareness campaign that raises the profile of literacy across PEI. Proceeds help fund our Summer Tutoring Program for Kids.

International Adult Learners’ Week is a celebration that recognizes the achievements of adult learners in PEI.

Tutors on Demand and the Sylvan Learning Centre offer tutoring to children who are having difficulties at school. These services are offered for a fee.

Career Development Services helps people to:

- Explore employment opportunities
- Assess your skills and interests
- Return to school to advance employment opportunities
- Make a career change
- Develop and/or improve job search skills

Career Bridges - Career Bridges is a vocational assessment and guidance program for people considering a career change or further training. They identify their client's interests, aptitudes and abilities. Career Bridges:

- Arranges job shadowing and/or career exposure
- Provides individual and group career counselling.
- Identifies client's interests, aptitudes and abilities
- Establishes goal setting and future employment paths
- Assists clients with resume, cover letter writing and interview strategies

Family Literacy Network is a group dedicated to enhancing family literacy in PEI. It is composed of representatives from:

- PEI Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- UPEI Centre for Education Research
- PEI Literacy Alliance
- Early Childhood Development Association
- The PEI Department of Education
- Learning and Reading Partners
- Take 30 for the Family

Take 30 for the Family is a family literacy promotion campaign initiated by the PEI Government. The program aims to foster healthy family development.

GED Marketing Campaign - The PEI government is presenting a \$25,000 promotion campaign to encourage people to complete their GEDs.

9) Recommendations

1. Incorporate LES assessments across the learning spectrum.
2. Provide LES upgrading opportunities to school leavers and adult learners in order to increase their chances of success.
3. Build ES programming into the school system.
4. Provide LES training for adult learning instructors to help them integrate ES into their curricula.
5. Build on Holland College's foundation courses with explicit ES programming.
6. Promote the use of LES on-line tools.
7. Promote the benefits of workplace learning opportunities to employers.
8. Continue to promote the LES framework to families, communities and workplaces.
9. Investigate the need for LES training opportunities in rural areas to coincide with the government's rural development strategy.
10. Promote the successful model created by Trout River Industries.
11. Provide more LES training and resources to respond to the growing need.

"60% of people with low literacy are at work; this where to reach them."

-- PEI Government Official

10) Summary

The situation in PEI is changing. We are moving from a resource-based economy to participate more fully in the knowledge-based economy. Training and resources must respond to new demands. Islanders must upgrade their skills in order to keep pace with the demands of the changing economy. Employees must upgrade and develop new skills so they won't be left behind. All Islanders must better understand the demands of the economic reality.

The PEI Literacy Alliance plays a valued and important role in the Island's LES community. We share information, provide training, build relationships and forge partnerships. We will continue to explore new ways to advance LES in PEI.