Reaching Across the Barriers: Increasing Outreach and Participation in Family and Adult Literacy Programs

A Report for Kingston Literacy

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Executive Summary

This report reviews literature on outreach and participation in family and adult literacy programs in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. We examine the barriers to participation that many potential learners face and suggest ways to overcome these barriers through well-planned outreach and promotion strategies. We argue that program providers should place a stronger emphasis on outreach and promotion in their daily planning and budgets.

We explore ways that literacy groups can pursue collaborative relationships with other local organizations in order to increase enrolment and build closer ties with the community. We also discuss the use of outreach programs that are specifically designed to allow practitioners to connect with new learners and recruit them into other upgrading courses. Some potential outreach programs include bookmaking classes, parenting groups, and computer skills workshops.

Some of the other outreach strategies discussed in this report include:
- holding information nights to meet community members.
- encouraging referrals from current participants.
- creating a community advisory group.
- hosting community activities such as children's clothing exchanges.
- distributing family literacy kits like those used by the Kingston Literacy Reading And Parents Program (RAPP).

In writing this report we aimed to achieve the following goals:
- review literature on outreach and participation in adult and family literacy programs in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

- examine barriers to participation and suggest ways to overcome these barriers to increase enrolment in literacy programs in Canada.

- examine how collaborative relationships between organizations can help strengthen outreach initiatives and increase enrolment.

- discuss successful outreach and promotion strategies employed by Kingston Literacy and place them in the context of current research findings.

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Introduction

Thinking about participation

Instead of being an afterthought, outreach and promotion efforts should be central to the planning and implementation of literacy programs. From small family learning centres to national literacy groups, literacy professionals need to come together and begin to seek out and connect with potential learners. Too often programs list outreach with other items on a budget line (Ontario Literacy Coalition & Kingston Literacy, 2004*).* Program providers must work towards the day when outreach has its own designated line on program budgets.

The importance of outreach and promotion

Many of the people who need literacy training face enormous barriers to participation. The process of outreach, or reaching out to those in need of the services that you provide, connects people to the services that they need and brings program participants through your door. The process of promotion, or informing the community about current and upcoming programs, will inform potential program participants of what is available to them, and can improve the visibility of literacy programs.

The target audience

In order to make the most out of sparse resources, literacy program providers should consider focusing their outreach strategies on one or two key communities. These may be areas suffering from problems such as high jobless rates, low socioeconomic status, and low education levels. Once an area is selected, the aim will be to gather as much information as possible about the target audience and the community. A profile of the target audience should be created that will aid in promotion efforts, listing details such as: dominant languages, demographic information, education levels, and the major employers in the area.

Examining communities and programs as a whole

Program providers need to examine the community as a whole when planning outreach strategies. Are there problems with crime and violence in the community? Are the major employers supportive of literacy training? Are subsidized childcare programs available? What other local organizations are providing programs and social services? Program providers need to answer these questions when planning and implementing upgrading programs.

Collaboration

Collaboration with other service providers and community groups is essential for both large and small-scale outreach activities. Collaboration requires that all parties involved benefit from the relationship (Beder, 1984b). Clear, formal agreements must be in place to ensure that all parties feel satisfied with the collaborative arrangements (ibid.). By joining with other service providers, literacy program providers can receive more appropriate referrals and benefit from increased support during promotional campaigns and recruitment initiatives.

Program-related barriers

Importantly, program providers must also look at themselves to determine if they are doing everything they can to reduce barriers and increase the accessibility of their programs. In several studies, barriers put in place by the program providers themselves accounted for a significant amount of lost participation (Beder & Valentine, 1990; Cross, 1981; Long & Middleton, 2001; Long & Taylor, 2002). In some cases, people who wanted to participate could not find information about literacy programs, while others had bad experiences interacting with program staff (Long & Middleton, 2001).

Discussion of sources reviewed in this report

A great deal more research needs to be done to determine the most effective outreach and promotion strategies for literacy programs in Canada. This literature review outlines a range of different strategies based on various studies and the experiences of Kingston Literacy. Key components of successful

programs must include children's programming, confirmation telephone calls, flexibility around timing, transportation assistance, food, accessible locations, friendly knowledgeable staff and be eight to ten sessions long. Definitive conclusions are especially difficult to draw from the research, due to variations in sample size, sample population and research methods. Most sample sizes, however, are small and drawn from relatively small populations.

One of the studies featured in this report that does have a national sample is Long and Taylor's 2002 study on nonparticipation in literacy and upgrading programs in Canada. In this study, Part One features the results of 44 interviews that were conducted across Canada with people who had not completed any literacy or upgrading programs despite having no high school diploma. The results from the interviews were then compared to Part Two of the study, which features surveys of 866 individuals from across Canada who had not completed high school and had never completed any literacy or upgrading training. Long and Taylor's study presents a national look at some of the reasons why people do not complete literacy programs despite being in need of, and even being interested in, upgrading. For example, Long and Taylor point out that many people who decide against participation in literacy training have been strongly affected by negative experiences with early education.

Long and Middleton's 2001 study on patterns of participation in Canadian adult literacy programs also offers some insight into ways that program providers can reach out to potential learners and increase enrolment levels. This study draws upon the experiences of 55 literacy and upgrading programs across Canada. Surveys were conducted with 338 Canadians who had sought literacy and upgrading services in the year prior to the study. It examines the experiences that these potential learners had as they tried to access literacy training. It offers valuable ideas on ways for program providers to break down barriers, especially barriers put in place by the programs themselves, which were found to be significant by many survey respondents.

Another significant study reviewed in this report is a 1999 study by Middleton and Bancroft Planning and Research Associates on calls to a Literacy BC Helpline. This project featured a longitudinal study with surveys of 248 people in British Columbia who called the Literacy BC Helpline between 1996 and 1997 to learn more about participating in literacy programs. Follow-up surveys were done to determine the success callers had with accessing literacy services. The results show that, of those who were interested in completing upgrading programs, the majority expressed a desire to complete literacy training in order to find employment or to improve their employment situation.

Some of the other studies reviewed in this report feature small-scale research on participation in adult basic education programs in the United States. Beder's 1990 study of barriers to participation in adult upgrading programs seeks to identify the factors that prevented students from completing programs in the past, and to determine the factors that helped them to finally enrol in a program. Also, Fingeret's 1983 study on the social networks of adults with low literacy skills offers some insight into the social aspect of participation in upgrading programs. In addition, Yaffe and William's 1998 study on why women chose to participate in upgrading programs offers suggestions for ways that program providers can reach out to non-participant women. For example, all of the women in this small study indicated that they preferred having female course instructors.

Other studies reviewed in this report examine non-participation in adult education and literacy programs in the United Kingdom. McGivney's 1990 study on access to education features an overview of the outreach activities of various different literacy and education programs in the U.K. Also, Thomas et al. (2004) has produced a large report on various outreach initiatives in literacy and upgrading programs in Britain. Both of these reports feature information from various different programs, offering a broad picture of some of the more successful strategies that upgrading programs have pursued in the U.K.

While sample sizes vary and some studies are more rigorous in their methodology than others, this literature review does offer sound ideas on ways to overcome barriers to participation and to increase enrolment in Canadian family and adult literacy programs. This report also demonstrates that there is a great need for further study on participation and outreach strategies in literacy programs in Canada and abroad.

1 – Overview of Outreach and Participation Issues

1.1 Current Outreach Practices

1.1.1 Outreach strategies employed by family and adult literacy programs

In order for a literacy upgrading course or program to appeal to potential participants as a worthwhile activity, it needs to be **relevant** to their linguistic, cultural and social experiences (Hart et al., 2002; Manson, 2002; Thomas et al., 2004; Yaffe & Williams, 1998). The participants must find the course content useful and valuable to their daily lives, or they will view the program as a waste of time (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2003).

The key is to **tailor** programs as much as possible to the specific needs of small communities (Manson, 2002). For example, incorporating the use of traditional languages, trades and customs into literacy programs can help increase participation and retention rates among First Nations learners (Literacy Alberta, 2004b). Recruitment and outreach also need to be varied to be successful (Thomas, 1990). Literacy programs should implement many different outreach strategies at once, to reach the optimum number of appropriate participants.

One strategy used for outreach and recruitment involves distributing **family literacy kits** to families with young children (Ontario Literacy Coalition & Kingston Literacy, 2004). The kits can include things like children's books, toys and crafts, along with information on the importance of incorporating literacy into daily family life. Pamphlets about available literacy programs can also be included, along with invitations to information nights (ibid.). Handing out literacy kits helps program providers to network and meet new people.

There are many **promotional strategies** that program providers can employ to get their message out. For example, literacy programs can print and distribute pamphlets, brochures, posters, business cards, magnets, and bookmarks to places like schools, libraries, community centres, playgroups, health units, legal aid offices, churches, bus shelters, malls and laundromats (Manson, 2002). Newspaper, television and radio advertisements can also be effective promotional tools (ibid.). Printing regular newsletters is another good way to keep the community informed (Jay, Kingston Literacy, & Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2003; Manson, 2002). Bus advertisements are also good promotion tools, and can be printed in other languages if there are other languages in your program (Middleton & Bancroft Planning and Research Associates, 1999).

Speaking tours, telephone campaigns and **attending community events** are other important outreach strategies. Speaking at community events, barbecues, school breakfasts, town hall meetings and other gatherings of potential participants can be a good way to promote a program, make contacts and encourage word-of-mouth referrals (Ontario Literacy Coalition & Kingston Literacy, 2004). Organizing telephone promotion campaigns, sending personal messages to individuals in the community and making home visits are also effective ways to promote literacy programs (Sapin & Padak, 1998).

Literacy coordinators can also **create programs** that are aimed at recruiting participants. The idea is to draw people through your doors with one type of activity, for the purpose of recruiting them into another program (Ontario Literacy Coalition & Kingston Literacy, 2004; Thomas et al., 2004). Some programs that have been used as a basis for recruitment include playgroups, parenting discussion groups, and recreational sports activities (ibid.). These programs offer a more relaxed setting for coordinators, facilitators and learners to get to know each other and discuss literacy training opportunities (Thomas et al., 2004).

At Kingston Literacy, program providers distribute family literacy resource packages throughout the community as a way to build connections with families and promote existing upgrading programs.

Outreach Strategies at Kingston Literacy:
The Reading And Parents Program (RAPP)

As part of the outreach process, Kingston Literacy developed the Reading And Parents Program (RAPP) in 1990. Book packs were created; each one containing a quality children's book, reading and language hints, poetry and fingerplays, a craft idea with the necessary materials for each child, and younger and older activity sheets all relating to the theme of the book. The individual packs are tailor-made: additional books are included in packs based on the ages and interests of the children in each family.

RAPP has continued over the years to be an important, thriving component of our family literacy programming in both urban and rural locations. RAPP is offered at resource centre playgroups throughout the community, an elementary school and at our own learning centres. Parents and caregivers can borrow book packs on a bi-weekly basis from RAPP staff. Maintaining strong community partnerships with such agencies as Better Beginnings for Kingston Children (BBKC), the Kingston Military Family Resource Centre (KMFRC) and the Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC) has been crucial to the growth of RAPP. These community organizations serve families with young children.

An important aspect of RAPP is the conversation that takes place between the parent and the RAPP facilitator about the pack being returned and the new one being received. Because of this RAPP format, our staff comes to know families over a sixteen to twenty week period. This allows facilitators to promote programs directly to potential participants. RAPP is a gentle approach that often leads parents to participate in other workshop series offered by Kingston Literacy.

1.1.2 Orientation and information nights

Another good outreach initiative involves using orientation or **information nights** to connect to new learners and promote literacy programs. In their handbook for Winnipeg's Book Bridges family literacy program, Wynes and Zakaluk (1997) emphasize the importance of holding these evenings for new programs. They explain how these can be used by an organization to present information to the community and to sign up new participants. Walking around the neighbourhood distributing invitations to information nights can also serve as a good opportunity to talk to people and promote your literacy program on a personal level. Be sure to provide food and beverages at your function, and make the effort to connect personally with the community members who attend.

1.1.3 Increasing consultation with the community

It is vital for program coordinators and facilitators to **consult** the community regularly on issues concerning program policy, course content, promotional campaigns and recruitment drives. This will help program providers get to know people in the community.

An excellent way to make consultation with the community an integral part of a program is to create a **community advisory committee** (Manson, 2002; Skage, 1996). The committee should include diverse representation from as many groups as possible in the community, such as: ethnic and cultural groups, unions, tenant associations, teachers, librarians, business leaders, residents, as well as the program participants, staff members and volunteers. These representatives should be engaged to advise on all aspects of the program structure and delivery, and can particularly help with promotion and outreach strategies.

If your literacy program is lucky enough to have the problem that too many people are volunteering to join your community advisory group, you can create several **smaller committees** to deal with individual projects and issues (Skage, 1996). If the program is having trouble finding people for the group, seek contacts and promotional help from established institutions like libraries, schools, and churches. With help, it should be possible to recruit a small group to provide

feedback and guidance to your literacy program on a regular basis. Another purpose of the advisory committee is to help foster support for learning within the community (ibid.). Committee members can also help fight against the silence that often results when people are afraid to discuss literacy problems with their friends and family (Thomas et al., 2004; Ziegahn, 1991).

1.1.4 Reaching out to families and social groups

People live their daily lives within the **context** of social and family groups, and coordinators must take this into account when reaching out to the community. If there is a culture of hostility towards formal education in the family or social group, recruitment will be especially difficult. Also, some family and cultural groups might consider it inappropriate for women to seek education outside of the home (Zieghan, 1991). Program providers must go to the social and family worlds of the people they want to reach: they can't expect people to come to them (Fingeret, 1983). However, part of the difficulty of outreach is that many people are too **ashamed** to admit that they have low literacy skills, and may not want to enrol in a program because they may be afraid of rejection by friends and acquaintances if the truth were known. Many people acquire excellent coping skills to mask their lack of literacy skills and may feel that revealing the truth will affect their credibility in some way. Program providers must always remember to respect the confidential nature of inquiries from potential participants. Therefore, visits to the home for recruitment purposes should be low-key and should emphasize confidentiality.

At Kingston Literacy, program providers make connections with individuals in the community through family literacy programming.

Outreach at Kingston Literacy: Parent Upgrading Programs

Recently, Kingston Literacy facilitated two distinct program models offering the same child development program on-site but with different parent literacy program components: upgrading based on a family literacy curriculum and upgrading based on a regular Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) small group format. Both programs offered facilitators many opportunities to pursue outreach initiatives. Both programs were offered for two mornings a week for sixteen weeks.

The Upgrading for Parents with Preschoolers (U.P.P.) model focused on improving reading and writing skills through family literacy content. The U.P.P. Program covered such family-related topics as self-esteem, nutrition, shopping, menu-planning, budgeting, healthy lifestyles, and language, cognitive and physical development. This small parent group met in a separate setting where other adult programming was not happening at the same time.

The parents in the Family Literacy/LBS Program took classes in English, math and computers with other adults at Kingston Literacy's Community Learning Centre, Kingston (CLCK). Participants tended to take two or all three subjects offered. Each parent had her own schedule based on subject level.

One family literacy upgrading model serves as an outreach tool for the other. For example, a parent and her children who participated in more than one delivery cycle of the Family Literacy/LBS Program had previously joined many family literacy workshops. She had also taken part in another parent upgrading program model we offered in the past.

1.2 Outreach as a Priority in Budgets and Planning

1.2.1 Clarifying and increasing outreach budgets

1.2.2 Creating an outreach plan

1.2.1 Clarifying and increasing outreach budgets

Several things become clear when taking a look at a sample of several budgets for outreach in Canadian family literacy programs: they are either too small or else disguised under a different category. Literacy program providers need to create outreach and promotion budgets that are described **separately** from other endeavours like program evaluation, training or research (ibid.).

1.2.2 Creating an outreach plan

Family and adult literacy programs will benefit from creating a set of outreach policies. Out of this an outreach plan or set of procedures should be drafted with the input of as many different stakeholders as possible and updated regularly. Some of the issues that can be clarified and described by an outreach plan include: the role and responsibilities of the community advisory committee; the responsibilities of program staff to perform outreach activities; policies on home visiting; the storage of confidential information gathered from potential clients and privacy issues; outreach training requirements for volunteers and staff. All staff members should be given a copy of the outreach plan.

1.3 Statistics on Literacy and Participation in Family Literacy Programs

1.3.1 Literacy levels in Canada

1.3.2 Participation in Canadian family literacy programs

1.3.1 Literacy levels in Canada

The International Adult Literacy Survey, or **IALS**, was a UNESCO project that measured the literacy rates of adults over the age of sixteen in 22 countries, including Canada. The IALS created five levels to describe literacy abilities, with level one being people who have the most difficulty reading and level five being people with the highest literacy levels (Literacy Alberta, 2004a). With data collections in 1994, 1996 and 1998, the survey found that about 22 percent of adult Canadians are at level one prose literacy level, meaning that they have great difficulty reading (ibid.). Therefore, about 1.4 million Canadian adults could potentially benefit from literacy training (ibid.).

1.3.2 Participation in Canadian literacy programs

Researchers recognize the need for further research to determine exactly how many Canadians with low literacy have enrolled in training over the past decade (Long & Middleton, 2001). According to recent estimates, about five to ten percent of Canadians with low literacy skills have actually sought out literacy programs since the first IALS survey (Long & Taylor, 2002). This means there is a great deal of work still to be done to recruit new participants to literacy programs.

1.4 Summary

Literacy programs should continue to pursue the promotion and outreach practices that are currently being employed in Canada, such as: flyer and poster campaigns; television and radio ads; newspaper ads; speaking tours; word-of-mouth promotions; telephone and letter campaigns; information nights; special recruitment programs; and home visits. However, more needs to be done to

make outreach and promotion central to the planning and implementation of literacy programs. Care must also be taken that the course content of programs remain relevant to the needs and experiences of the target community, so that potential learners find the training useful to their daily lives. This will require regular communication and consultation with the community.

Literacy professionals also need to cultivate personal contacts in the community, making connections with the social and family networks in which people live their daily lives. By having community advisory boards and developing long-term relationships with social and family leaders, a literacy professional will be much more likely to get direct referrals of those who face the greatest barriers to participation – the learners who are generally not reached through traditional promotion or recruitment drives.

2 – Barriers to Participation and Strategies for Overcoming Them

2.1 Program Related Barriers to Participation

2.1.1 Examining the program itself

2.1.2 Program length and schedules

2.1.3 Improving visibility

2.1.4 Unfriendly or unhelpful frontline staff

2.1.1 Examining the program itself

Researchers have noted that program-related barriers are frequently cited by non-participants as **central reasons for not enrolling** in a literacy program (Hart et al., 2002; Long & Middleton, 2001; Middleton & Bancroft Planning and Research Associates, 1999). For example, when asked for their main reason for not enrolling in a literacy program, 43 percent of subjects in Long & Middleton's (2001) study listed a program/policy-related reason as their main reason (p. 48). Respondents cited reasons such as: wrong course content; inconvenient location; long waiting lists; lack of help for learning disabilities; and the high costs of tutors (ibid.). According to Long & Middleton, "program/policy-related barriers were the main deterrents for the largest percentage of potential learners" (ibid., p. 9). Likewise, in the Hart et al. (2002) non-participant study, 28.4 percent of respondents described being moderately to extremely concerned that the literacy program would not be "relevant to daily life" when they considered enrolling in a program but did not enrol, with 12.3 percent feeling "extremely concerned" (p. 102). Furthermore, the authors note that many respondents felt that their "social, cultural or geographical context made programs seem irrelevant" (ibid., p. 37).

Strategies for breaking down program-related barriers: making programs relevant and adaptable to individual and cultural needs

For recruitment efforts to be successful, it is crucial that literacy programs design course content to be relevant to the **cultural and social experiences** of potential participants, reflecting "the realities of their lives" (Manson, 2002, p. 10-13). For example, Leis (1994) notes that rural literacy programs in

particular need to design course content and learning materials to reflect the "distinct geographic, economic, social, and employment characteristics" of rural areas (p. 29). If a community's primary employer happens to be a car plant for example, literacy programs in the area should reflect this reality and offer course content relevant to jobs in the car making industry.

2.1.2 Program length and schedules

It is difficult to please everyone when deciding on the **length** of a family or adult literacy program. The longer the program runs, the greater the time commitment, so shorter programs (4 –12 weeks) will likely have more success in recruiting new participants. In a report on participation in adult education courses in Canada, Sceviour (2001) argues that "An inverse relationship was observed between the participation rate and study duration. In general, provinces with a low participation rate scored high on the average duration of study" (p. 11). In other words, Sceviour argues, the longer the program is, the lower the participation rates will be. However, as Beder (1990a) notes, many non-participants also worry about not having enough time to complete a literacy program. Within reason, program length should be as flexible as possible, to accommodate people who learn at different paces.

Programs should also offer as much choice and flexibility as possible when designing class **schedules**. Hart et al. (2002) note that 32.2 percent of non-participants surveyed were moderately to extremely concerned that programs "might be too rigid/structured" when they considered enrolling in a program, with 11.9% "extremely concerned" (p. 102). Programs may have to increase the use of one-to-one sessions with tutors in order to accommodate varied schedules.

Strategies for breaking down program-related barriers: allowing participants to work at their own pace

Being able to offer a program that allows people to work at their own **pace** could also be a strong selling point for learners: for example, Huget (2002) notes that First Nations learners in particular expressed a desire "to graduate at their own pace" (p. 53). Furthermore, not being able to work at one's own pace was cited as one of the top program-related reasons why respondents said that they have not participated in a literacy program (Hart et al., 2002). Also, 33.3% of non-participant respondents in the same study were moderately to extremely concerned that literacy programs took too long to complete, with 12.3% "extremely concerned" (ibid., p. 102). Every learner will have different preferences, according to their needs. The factors influencing the length of a program need to be addressed on a case by case basis.

Strategies for overcoming program-related barriers: increasing the flexibility and adaptability of programs

Course content and delivery need to be **flexible** and adaptable to various different learning styles and life situations. In her study of literacy programs in B.C., Huget (2002) notes that many of the community leaders, educators and literacy professionals that she interviewed expressed the "need for more flexible hours and creative approaches to upgrading" (p. 53). Many respondents also complained to Huget that there were "limited options available for their clients to upgrade their skills in a way that meets their needs for employment" (p. 38). Huget suggests that literacy programs need to work closely with major employers to provide training that is relevant to local jobs and offered at appropriate times for local workers (ibid.).

> **Outreach Strategies at Kingston Literacy: Flexibility**
>
> For outreach programs and parent upgrading programs, it is important not to be locked in to a prescribed curriculum. As facilitators, it is imperative to be constantly assessing program sessions and to be asking for feedback. Acting upon feedback, incorporating suggestions and making changes demonstrates a willingness on the facilitator's part to make it a better experience for parents. Otherwise, families may not complete a program or join other programs your organization offers. If space is available, parents should be able to join part way through a program because this may be the only opportunity to establish a connection.

2.1.3 Unfriendly or unhelpful frontline staff

Research also demonstrates the importance of having **friendly,** well-trained people in frontline positions such as information phone line workers. According to Long and Middleton's (2001) study of participation in Canadian literacy programs, 20 percent of survey respondents who had recently phoned a literacy program or information line to inquire about upgrading cited an unfriendly response from phone staff as a contributing reason for not enrolling in a program afterwards (p. 50). Long and Middleton note that one of the reasons survey respondents gave for not enrolling included finding the contact person at the program unhelpful or "not knowledgeable" (p. 48). Several survey respondents also complained that, after they phoned literacy programs and left messages asking for further information about signing up for literacy training, no one from the literacy program staff returned their calls (p. 52).

Strategies for overcoming program-related barriers: follow-up

Program providers need to **follow-up** immediately on inquiries that are left on answering machines or require return calls (Long & Middleton, 2001; Middleton & Bancroft Planning and Research Associates, 1999; Sapin & Padak, 1998). One study of callers to a literacy information line notes that "…a substantial proportion of those who tried but never enrolled spoke of being discouraged – usually because of lack of follow-up on the program's part" (Middleton and Bancroft Planning and Research Associates, 1999, p. 42).

At Kingston Literacy, efforts are made to stay in close contact with program participants both during the enrolment process and throughout the program delivery.

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<u>Outreach Strategies at Kingston Literacy: Confirmation Calls</u>

Once families have registered for outreach or parent upgrading programs, we tend to call them close to the program start date and check that they will still be coming. It provides an opportunity to ask if they have any questions and to address concerns. For practical purposes, the number and ages of children attending needs to be confirmed because additional childcare staff may have been hired to accommodate the families registered. After parents have started participating in a program, but attendance is inconsistent, they are phoned. The idea is not to make parents feel badly but to let them know that they are missed and address any worries. Sometimes if parents do miss a session or two, they feel too far behind with the rest of the group, therefore, reassurance is key. However, reminders are given that program space has been reserved for both themselves and their children, and that phone calls are appreciated ahead of time when possible if a family will not be able to attend.

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<u>2.2 Economic and Circumstantial Barriers to Participation</u>

2.2.1 Transportation

2.2.2 Lack of childcare

2.2.3 Financial problems

2.2.4 Health and security issues

2.2.5 Conflict with employment

2.2.1 Transportation

Lack of transportation can be a major **barrier** to participation, especially in rural areas and communities suffering from poverty and unemployment. The hardest-to-reach learners are usually the least likely to own a car, have access to a car, public transport or even have the money for public transit should it exist. Even people who are comfortable financially may not want to spend their money on transportation to programs. Furthermore, some learning centres are not accessible by public transit, and vast areas of our country have no public transit system at all. Clearly, transportation issues need to be considered when planning and implementing literacy programs.

Transportation may be a particular problem for a literacy program if it has learning centres that are **located far away** from their target communities. For example, in Long and Middleton's (2001) study of callers to B.C. literacy programs, "inconvenient location" was listed by 31 percent of respondents, including 40 percent of respondents aged 25-34, as one of their reasons for not enrolling (ibid., p. 50). It is also important to note that 47 percent of respondents listed "money problems" as one of their reasons for not enrolling (ibid.). When financial problems are present, transportation problems tend to follow. For example, Hart et al. (2002) note in their study that 34.6% of respondents who considered taking a literacy program but did not enrol were moderately to extremely concerned that "the transportation would cost too much" (p. 102). A full 10.1% of respondents were extremely concerned about the cost of transportation (ibid.).

Lack of transportation is a major problem for literacy programs offered in **rural areas**. This is due to the expense involved with transportation in vast, sparsely populated rural areas (Leis, 1994). People might not be able to afford to travel the extended distances required of them to attend a program. Due to the massive areas covered in one service area, the fact that the population is small and dispersed, and the lack of public transportation networks in rural areas, rural literacy programs will always require more funding for transportation (and consequently, for outreach) than their urban counterparts (Cavanagh, 1996).

Strategies for overcoming economic barriers to participation: offering free transportation to programs using volunteer drivers

Ideally, programs would provide **free transportation** to all participants. When funding is not available, however, programs will need to rely on volunteers to provide rides (Cavanagh, 1996). One way to encourage volunteer drivers is to offer them some reimbursement for mileage costs, which is substantially less expensive than hiring professional drivers (ibid). Volunteer ride systems can also encourage family members of participants to become more involved with the program (Levine, Murphy & Wilson, 1998).

Outreach at Kingston Literacy: Transportation Budgets

In order for parents to attend outreach workshops as well as access upgrading programs, it is crucial that they have access to some level of transportation support if needed. A transportation budget should be built into every project. Transportation is expensive, and travelling with an infant or more than one young child can be a challenge for participants. Especially in the winter, parents may be deterred by unpleasant weather, icy sidewalks, late buses, and having many items to carry. Transportation may represent a substantial amount in terms of the total budget for a project, but it is worth the money spent. Transportation may be the determining factor as to whether or not a parent registers for a program.

2.2.2 Lack of childcare

Lack of childcare can be another serious barrier to participation. Manson (2002) notes that lack of childcare is one of the most **commonly cited** reasons people give for not participating in literacy programs. Long and Middleton (2001) note that 6.2 percent of respondents in their study listed "lack of care of children" as the main reason why they did not enrol in a literacy program after considering one, and 32 percent of respondents listed this as one of their reasons for not enrolling (p.51). Likewise, Hart et al. (2002) report that 26.5% of respondents in their study were moderately to extremely concerned that they would have "difficulties in arranging childcare" when they considered enrolling in a program but did not, with 18.1 percent of respondents "extremely concerned" (p. 103).

Strategies for overcoming economic barriers to participation: offering free childcare to program participants

If possible, literacy programs should offer **free** childcare services, or help arrange subsidized childcare for participants. Coldblatt and McBean (2002) note that potential participants will be concerned about the quality and safety of the childcare facilities provided by a literacy program. Program providers may reassure parents as to the quality of the childcare at the program or choose instead to arrange for childcare through other established childcare centres, or simply help participants to access subsidized childcare. Whether a childcare service is operated by the program, or participants are connected with another source of subsidized childcare, the important thing is that childcare support is included in budgets and planning.

At Kingston Literacy, children's programming and childcare services are integral components of regular literacy and upgrading programs.

Childcare and Children's Programming at Kingston Literacy

In order for parents to access upgrading programs, it is extremely important to provide childcare if needed. Offering a children's program while parents attend workshops has been a major incentive for participants. Parents may not have alternative care for their children nor be able to afford the expense, so could not otherwise attend. They like the fact that their children are participating in a program at the same time and in the same location as their own; the children are nearby and in good care. Also, the adults enjoy a bit of time on their own with other parents.

For organizations planning similar projects, a well-developed, enriched children's program is recommended. Our Children's Coordinator provides consistency, structure and quality programming. She builds a rapport with the children within one outreach program but also over a number of programs. We are not relying on a patchwork of supply childcare staff. Depending on which program is being offered, she is able to offer informed but casual observations or more formal assessments.

With a childcare component built into a regular upgrading model, intake can be more continuous. There is not the same pressure to have all participants registered on the first day. Parents seem pleased to be able to bring their children. They feel that they are doing something good for themselves and also for their children. When we have offered family literacy upgrading as part of the regular LBS programming, we received positive feedback about the concurrent children's program. One parent viewed it as if the families were going to school together. Parents spoke highly of the Children's Coordinator and her facilitation of the children's program.

2.2.3 Financial problems

Financial problems can represent a **major barrier** to participation. In Long and Middleton's (2001) study, 47 percent of respondents listed "money problems" as one of the reasons why they did not enrol in a program, with 1.9 percent of respondents citing "money worries" as the main reason why they did not enrol (p. 51). In the Hart et al. (2002) study, 49.9 percent of respondents indicated that they were moderately to extremely concerned about "money problems in general" when they considered enrolling in literacy training but did not, with 29.6 percent of respondents "extremely concerned" (p. 102). Financial difficulties tend to increase all other barriers to participation. High levels of personal stress produce anxiety that is detrimental to successful learning. This means that, while many Canadian family and adult literacy training programs are offered free of charge, participants with financial problems may still have trouble accessing them.

Strategies for overcoming economic barriers to participation: exploring the use of monetary incentives

While literacy groups will not always have the funds to offer **monetary incentives**, like graduation awards and scholarships, they should be explored as a way to recruit hard-to-reach adults. For example, Huget (2002) notes that workplace literacy programs are most successful when tied to monetary incentives, such as offering employees paid leave to attend programs. Likewise, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2003) suggests increasing tax breaks for employers who offer financial support for literacy programs. Furthermore, Sapin and Padak (1998) also suggest exploring the use of incentives and rewards for people who complete literacy programs, or for those who provide referrals.

Food as an Outreach Tool at Kingston Literacy

Recognizing that people with financial challenges may not always be able to afford healthy meals, a snack is always included for both the children's and the adult's portion of any outreach programs we offer. Participants appreciate the snack, and the food may even serve as a draw to the program. Another option, depending on the program budget, is for families to take food home each week, as well as being provided with a snack during a workshop session. Taking it one step further, a meal may be offered in conjunction with a program.

2.2.4 Health and security issues

People need to take care of their health and security first, and when these are compromised, it may prevent people from participating in literacy programs. In many Canadian communities, problems with crime, drug addiction, alcohol abuse and disease are part of daily life. In order to be **healthy and secure**, communities need to have access to: clean drinking water; hospitals and public nurses; police services; fire and rescue services; and adequate housing. Communities need to be free of major problems like crime, political unrest and violence before residents can focus on the problem of low literacy skills (Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2003).

Health problems in potential learners also represent a source of **lost participation** for literacy programs. As Auerbach (1989) notes, barriers to education can arise when people have concerns about "family health problems" (p. 175). Long and Middleton (2001), note in their study that 13 percent listed health problems as only one of the reasons for not enrolling (p. 51) while 1.2 percent of survey respondents who had considered enrolling in a literacy program but chose not to, listed health problems as their main reason for not enrolling.

In their report on the Better Beginnings, Better Futures Project, Peters, Petrunka and Arnold (2003) argue that **preventative health initiatives** should be pursued in the community by many different organizations working together, in order to create a "comprehensive, community-based prevention strategy that can promote the longer term development of young children, their families, and their local neighborhoods" (p. 226). By working closely with local health and social services, literacy program providers can join in the effort to foster healthy communities.

2.2.5 Conflict with employment

Employment conflicts also represent a major barrier to participation in family and adult literacy programs. For example, Cross (1981) cites research indicating that about 28 percent of survey respondents who were eligible for adult education but did not participate listed "**job responsibilities**" as a reason for not pursuing education (p. 99). Likewise, Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) note that respondents in their study of deterrents to adult education listed both lack of support from employers and inconvenient class times as significant factors preventing them from participating in education (p. 183). Furthermore, Hart et al. (2002) note that 44.1 percent of non-participants in their study were moderately to extremely concerned about conflicts with their job when they considered enrolling in a program but did not, with 21.4 percent indicating that they were "extremely concerned" (p. 99). Likewise, in Long and Middleton's (2001) study, "job-related conflicts" was listed by 16.1 percent of respondents as the main reason why they did not enrol in a literacy program after considering one, with 32 percent indicating that job-related conflicts was one of the reasons for not enrolling (Long & Middleton, 2001, p. 51).

Strategies for overcoming employment barriers: working with employers

Clearly, it is difficult for people who work to find the time to participate in education. As Tyler (1996) notes, it is vital for workers to receive support from employers, such as paid leave to attend literacy training. Family literacy program providers should always work to support and encourage workplace literacy programs.

2.3 Psychological and Emotional Barriers to Participation

2.3.1 Negative early educational experiences

2.3.2 No perception of need

2.3.3 Fear of failure and failure avoidance

2.3.1 Negative early educational experiences

The early education experiences that adult learners have are of **particular importance** in how they view present educational opportunities, and can represent a serious barrier to participation. Long and Taylor (2002) note in their study of non-participants: "A particularly pronounced finding from stage one is the degree to which people are still affected by negative early school experiences" (p. 9). Many First Nations people, for example, suffer from Residential School Syndrome, a serious aversion to formal schooling, due to the terrible experiences that many had in residential schools (Manson, 2002). Recruitment campaigns will need to emphasize differences between formal school and literacy programs (ibid).

It is interesting to note that respondents to Long and Middleton's (2001) survey who had higher levels of formal education were more likely to have **positive feelings** towards their early educational experiences. For example, 61 percent of respondents with less than grade 5 education had "very negative" feelings about their early educational experiences, while only 5.6 percent of those with

less than grade 5 education felt "very positive" about their early experiences (ibid., p. 32). Comparatively, only 8.8 percent of those with some post-secondary education had "very negative" feelings about their early educational experiences, while a full 50 percent claimed they had "very positive" feelings (ibid.). Therefore, when people have low levels of formal schooling, they will be more likely to have negative feelings about their educational experiences, and therefore more likely to have negative views about literacy programs.

Strategies for overcoming psychological barriers to participation: Combating negative perceptions of literacy programs

Many potential participants have **negative attitudes** towards literacy programs. Negative perceptions can include ideas about what the teacher will be like, the nature of the course content and the expected behaviour of other class participants. These perceptions may be based on adverse school experiences. Long and Taylor's (2002) study of non-participants found that negative perceptions about literacy programs were "firmly rooted in early memories of school" (p. 14). Through the use of positive advertising campaigns and testimonials from past participants, program providers can attempt to break down some of the misconceptions held by potential learners.

2.3.2 No perception of need

A very difficult obstacle to overcome when recruiting participants to literacy education is a lack of perceived need for literacy training, when people feel that literacy is of **no value** or use to them in their daily lives. Beder (1990) identifies ten reasons that respondents to his survey identified for not enrolling in education that he classifies under the category of "low perception of need" (p. 12). These reasons include: the feeling that education will not improve life; feeling too old for school; not feeling motivated enough to attend programs; and feeling that school

will not "make you smarter" (ibid.). Designing programs that are relevant to the lives of the target community will be the best way to combat this barrier. Promoting the benefits of literacy training for children in the family can also be an effective way to convince parents to attend literacy training (Wood, 2004).

2.3.3 Fear of failure and failure avoidance

Another common and powerful barrier to education can involve the fear of failure, or **failure avoidance**. In Seifert's (1996) study of learning motivation theories, he discusses the tendency that many learners have to avoid failure by not engaging in tasks when they do not feel confident in success. Motivation theorists have noted that students "will behave in such a manner as to protect perceptions of competency and self-worth" (ibid., p. 4). In other words, people often will avoid failure by avoiding the task that they feel they might not succeed in. This can be another difficult barrier to overcome, and it is tied to self-confidence and the ability potential learners have to take risks. Again, emphasizing a safe and welcoming atmosphere for literacy training may help to combat this barrier.

At Kingston Literacy, program providers recognize the need for offering a safe and welcoming atmosphere to potential learners.

Outreach Program at Kingston Literacy

Outreach programs require a very welcoming, low key approach. They provide an initial opportunity to establish a rapport with families and a reason for parents to become involved in an organization without extensive commitments on their part. Through this format, facilitators can casually inform parents about other programs. A form of promotion can be to weave samples of other workshops into an outreach program (e.g. doing a make-and-take as part of a playgroup). If parents sense that they will not be put on the spot or made to feel uncomfortable at an outreach program, they may be more willing to try other types of programs recommended by the facilitator, such as upgrading.

2.4 Family and Social Barriers to Participation

       2.4.1 Family and social networks

       2.4.2 Unsupportive friends and family members

       2.4.3 The desire for secrecy as a major barrier to participation

       2.4.4 The stigma of low literacy skills

2.4.1 Family and social networks

When designing outreach strategies, literacy program providers need to be aware of the profound **influence** that friends and family members have on potential participants. Social and family groups have an enormous influence over our attitudes, as Lovell (1980) notes: "Apart from providing us with guidance on how to behave socially…the groups that we belong to often influence the formation and development of our values, attitudes and opinions"(p. 91). Therefore, learners belonging to social or family environments that are hostile to formal learning are far less likely to participate in literacy training (ibid.).

Fingeret (1983) notes that most adults with low literacy rely on close **networks** of friends and family members for assistance with reading and writing. It is important to think about and understand social networks if we are to connect to those with low literacy in the community. Adults with low literacy regularly exchange their services, such as repair work or childcare, for reading assistance from others (ibid.). According to Fingeret, many people do not feel the need to take literacy training because of the ease of which they obtain help with reading (ibid.). In these cases, literacy programs should try to gain the support of social leaders in order to gain their help in drawing out hard-to-reach learners.

Fingeret also notes that many adults with low literacy expressed hesitation at achieving literacy skills, for fear that they would **disrupt** their social network and make current social relationships awkward (1983). Adults who have been supported in their literacy by a partner in the past may encounter relationship problems as a result of their new found independence. She argues that adults are more likely to enrol in literacy training programs if they have experienced recent social change particularly with regard to their primary relationship. Their social relationships are less likely to be affected by their increased literacy (ibid.) during times of change in their lives. That is why program providers should be aware when new people move into the community – they may be good candidates for recruitment.

Program providers must also recognize that attending a training course is a **social** experience, with social interactions and situations, which can lead some people to feel fear or intimidation (Levine, 1986; Long & Middleton, 2001; Long, 2002). Promotions that include testimonials from people who have succeeded in literacy programs in the past can help to calm people's fears about learning in a social setting (Middleton & Bancroft Planning and Research Associates, 1999).

In some studies, learners indicated that they would like to **bring a friend** or family member with them to the literacy course for added support (Come & Fredericks, 1995; Long, 2002). Program providers should be flexible to these

types of requests and should be sensitive to the difficulties many people have facing social situations. Again, creating a warm and safe atmosphere in the learning centre is vital, which requires caring and sensitivity on behalf of program coordinators, facilitators and tutors.

Kingston Literacy strives to provide a sensitive and supportive atmosphere for the program participants.

Creating a Supportive Environment at Kingston Literacy

In order to retain participants in programs, a supportive environment is required. Do parents feel that a facilitator is sensitive to their circumstances? Are they being heard? It becomes even more crucial when people start upgrading classes because they may feel vulnerable. The teachers or facilitators need to be motivating and accepting. One parent in an LBS upgrading program summed it up well. She said, "I really feel comfortable in class . Nobody laughs or anything when you aren't as good at things as they are. I like the fact that if I need help over and over again on the same thing I am not made to look stupid, and I am not afraid to ask for help in front of people." Parents have commented that the teachers in the LBS program were non-judgmental, and the atmosphere was relaxed.

2.4.2 Unsupportive friends and family members

Many of the people who need literacy training **do not have the support** of their loved ones, making any other barriers even more difficult to overcome. For example, in Long and Middleton's participation study (2001), 14% of respondents cited unsupportive family members as one reason why they had not enrolled in a program despite considering it (p. 60). These kinds of barriers will require literacy program providers to connect personally to family groups in order to encourage a culture of learning in the community.

2.4.3 The desire for secrecy as a major barrier to participation

In several studies, the desire for **secrecy** on behalf of the potential learner represents a major barrier to participation (Beder, 1991a; Beder, 1991b; Cross, 1981; Fingeret, 1983; Leis, 1994; Long, 2002; Long & Middleton, 2001; Martini & Page, 1996). This silence can work both ways: those with low literacy skills are too ashamed to talk about it, and their loved ones are too afraid of embarrassing them to bring it up as well (Fingeret, 1983; Zieghan, 1991). We must work hard to make it easier for people to talk about low literacy, but it will take a variety of different initiatives and promotional campaigns on a local and national scale to fight against the stigma and secrecy that surrounds low literacy skills.

2.4.4 The stigma of low literacy skills

In his article on stigma, Beder (1991b) discusses the **difficulties** facing people who have low literacy skills because of it. Beder notes that a stigma involves feelings of shame, inadequacy, loss of dignity, embarrassment and exclusion from society (ibid.). Importantly, the stigma attached to low literacy is a "discreditable" stigma, meaning that it will remain hidden until revealed by the stigmatized individual (ibid., p. 69). This can lead to even greater harm as adults with low literacy skills struggle to cover their literacy problems or avoid seeking training out of fear of being revealed as a person with low literacy skills (ibid.).

Interestingly, the stigma of low literacy can sometimes be a **motivating** factor for adults considering participation. According to Beder (1991b): "while for many the stigma may deter participation in adult literacy education, a desire to remove it may motivate participation in others" (p. 70). A primary goal of promotional campaigns and public service announcements by literacy programs should be to remove the stigma attached to low literacy. Programs must avoid perpetuating stigma myths in promotional advertisements, especially the myth that having low-literacy leads to chronic failures in life (ibid.)

2.5 Age, Gender, Culture and Community Population as Factors Affecting Participation

2.5.1 The significance of age

2.5.2 Awareness of gender differences

2.5.3 Involving fathers in literacy programs

2.5.4 Reaching out to individuals within cultural groups

2.5.5 Participation in rural versus urban areas

2.5.1 The significance of age

Increasing age is a **major factor** affecting participation in family and adult literacy programs, and outreach strategies and promotions should be targeted to specific age groups whenever possible. Most research indicates that participation rates generally decline with age (Long & Middleton, 2001; McGivney, 1990; Sceviour, 2001). For example, Sceviour (2001) notes: "A sharp decrease in participation [in adult education] occurs among those 55 years and older. Only 5% of Canadians over 64 years of age participate in a structured learning activity compared with 40% in younger age groups" (p. 29). Likewise, in Long and Middleton's (2001) study of callers to literacy programs in B.C., only 18 percent of callers were over the age of 45 (p. 30). Clearly, it will be necessary to work harder to convince older learners of the benefits of enrolling in literacy training.

Older learners may also feel more **anxious or nervous** of attending literacy programs than their younger counterparts, due to a feeling that they are too old for school (Beder, 1990; Cross, 1981). Long and Middleton (2001) note that 47 percent of survey respondents who were 45 years of age or older cited "worry or nervousness about school" as a reason for not enrolling in literacy programs, compared to only 34 percent of respondents aged 16 – 44 (p. 63). Promotions and recruitment campaigns that are targeted to older learners should emphasize that all ages are welcome, and should feature images and examples of older learners. Long and Taylor (2002) also note the importance of spreading the message that it is "never too late to learn" (p. 105).

2.5.2 Awareness of gender differences

Program coordinators and facilitators should be aware of gender differences as they relate to outreach and participation issues. **Separate recruitment strategies** aimed at men and women should be employed in order to address the issues that are more likely to concern each gender. For example, Hayes (1990) notes that the women in his study were more likely than men to suffer from low self-confidence, have dependent children and have low employment rates (p. 7). Likewise, Long and Middleton's (2001) study notes differences in the barriers to participation cited by men and women: "Overall, women were much more likely to cite socioeconomic-circumstantial factors than men…Upon calling, more than 40 percent of women and close to 20 percent of men cited childcare conflicts as a factor in their decision not to enroll" (p. 12). Apart from being more likely to have childcare responsibilities, women are also slightly more likely to have an unsupportive spouse (ibid., p. 60).

When considering enrolling in literacy programs, women also seem more likely than men to be: nervous or anxious about attending a literacy program; concerned about not receiving individual attention; concerned that they might be older than the other students; concerned that they might not be treated as an adult; and concerned that "the teacher might not be friendly" (Hart et al., 2002, p. 108). Promotions targeting women could **address these concerns** and assure potential participants that programs offer safe and supportive environments.

A good way to recruit women to programs might be to offer **specific programs for women**, facilitated and attended by women only. In their article about women participants in the Even Start community education program in the U.S., Yaffe and Williams (1998) write: "According to the women, the most attractive feature of the…program was the trusting, supporting environment provided by women " (p. 13). Indeed, more women might be recruited to participate in literacy training if they knew that the program would be "by women for women" (ibid.).

2.5.3 Involving fathers in literacy programs

Another issue facing literacy program providers concerns how to recruit and **involve more men** in literacy programs. Family literacy programs in particular should make the effort to connect to fathers and other significant males in participant families, to encourage men to act as positive role models for their young children (Karther, 2002). McBride and Rane (1997) argue that "in light of the positive contributions men can make to children's development, it is important to reach out specifically to fathers/men" (p. 12). It can be a challenge to get men involved, however, as many men consider their wives to be the family's "primary teacher and caregiver" (Karther, 2002, p. 191). Likewise, in their article on getting men involved in early childhood programs, Levine et al. (1998) note that "most programs assume that women will be the primary participant and the main contact with the family" (p. 13). It will be necessary for literacy programs to fight against this stereotype and make the effort to include men in the process of maintaining contact with participant families.

Program providers also need to explore ways to open programs up to **greater family participation** in general. For example, a couple might participate in a literacy training program together, with one completing the literacy training and the other providing help and support throughout the entire process. Literacy programs should encourage both men and women to look at upgrading as a positive experience to be shared with their loved ones.

Levine et al. (1998) caution program providers to include fathers in all event planning, and not to "assume that fathers are going to be unavailable" (p. 17). They point out that fathers, especially divorced ones, **often need to be informed separately** about program events. They also suggest creating a father-friendly environment in the program facilities, by hanging pictures on the wall of men reading with their children.

According to Levine et al. (1988), the best way to **recruit men** to volunteer for literacy programs is to ask them to provide rides, repairs, or serve food for

events. Specific events can also be created to encourage father involvement in education, such as Saturday morning breakfast programs and men's clubs that meet regularly to discuss literacy and help out with the program (ibid.). Free computer access can also serve as another draw and computer assistance classes might also be popular. Recognizing father involvement in newsletters and newspaper articles is another way to sustain male involvement (ibid.). Male role models such as sports heroes can also be used for promotions, to urge dads to get more involved with family literacy (Greer, 2001).

2.5.4 Reaching out to individuals within cultural groups

It can be difficult to connect with cultural groups and recruit them to literacy programs. Language barriers, different attitudes about the importance of education, and even open hostility to outsiders can all be challenges faced by literacy professionals trying to reach out. It is essential, therefore, that program instructors are **sensitive** to cultural differences and are free of racist attitudes (Morrow & Young, 1997). Literacy program providers must also ensure that course content and materials are culturally relevant to the groups being served (Manson, 2002, Thomas et al., 2004). This will take the help and involvement of members of the cultural group in the design of course content and materials. Programs should incorporate traditional knowledge, languages, stories and customs when designing course content and supporting materials. Some strategies for connecting to cultural groups include: attending community activities to meet new people; walking around the neighbourhood and having informal conversations with community members; and incorporating the traditional languages of local cultures in promotions (Rodriguez, 1994).

2.5.5 Participation in rural versus urban areas

The size of the community that a person lives in does seem to have some **effect** on their likelihood to participate. Certainly, barriers such as lack of childcare and lack of transportation are more pronounced in rural areas. Research does seem to indicate that rural residents are slightly less likely to participate in literacy

programs. For example, Long and Middleton (2001) note that 52 percent of callers to literacy programs who lived in communities of 15,000 people or less did not enrol in a program after considering one, while only 32 percent of callers who lived in cities over 500,000 did not enrol in programs (p. 44). Clearly, more research is needed to investigate differences in participation between rural and urban areas. It is worth mentioning that most people will travel an average of thirty minutes to access programs either by foot or by some kind of transport regardless of whether it is in an urban or rural area. Any longer than thirty minutes traveling time seems to be a barrier. However, as Cavanagh (1996) notes, barriers faced by rural learners are generally higher than urban learners, due to the "rural geographic and social realities – large distances, few services, lower population density and isolation" (p. 1).

Interestingly, Long and Middleton (2001) also note that 36 percent of respondents to their study who lived in communities of 15,000 people or less listed **job-related reasons** as their main motivation for seeking literacy training, while only 26 percent of all callers and only 17 percent of callers in cities of over 500,000 people listed job-related reasons as their main reason for seeking training (p. 43). Program providers should be aware of the employment patterns in their area, as many people want to take literacy courses that will help them in their jobs (Beder & Valentine, 1999).

2.6 Motivation and Learning

2.6.1 Common motivations for participating in learning

2.6.2 Thinking about motivation when promoting literacy programs

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2.6.1 Common motivations for participating in learning

It is important to understand what motivates people to pursue education, as we can use this knowledge to design promotions and course content that will be relevant and **appeal** to different groups of people. In his article on motivation in adult education, Schenstead (1997) notes that the biggest factor motivating adults seeking education is a desire for learning to be "important to them in a tangible way…Adult learners are looking for real and worthwhile learning experiences that will make a difference in their lives" (p. 4). Schenstead also argues that it is of vital importance that the "initial contact the student has with the learning material is a positive one" (ibid., p. 9). Therefore, frontline staff and program instructors need to be very friendly, encouraging and positive when they interact with program participants, and the learning material should be relevant and at the appropriate level.

Kingston Literacy recognizes the need to have consistent, continuous staffing for programs. This encourages connections between Kingston Literacy and families in the community.

Staffing at Kingston Literacy

If we look at outreach as a step-by-step approach, then to have some continuity of staffing from one program to the next is part of a smooth transition. Parents may be more apt to attend another program if they or their children have already established a connection with someone from an organization. For example, the Children's Coordinator for Kingston Literacy facilitates all of the children's programming, whether it is for an outreach program, a family literacy upgrading program or for the regular LBS program. As well, she provides RAPP in the community, and facilitates parent-child playgroups and music circle programs. Therefore, this staff member serves as a link between many of our programs.

Long and Middleton's (2001) study of participation in Canadian literacy programs also demonstrates some of the **common motivations** that people have for seeking literacy training. For example, 29 percent of respondents in their study listed "general educational" as their main motivation for seeking a program, with 26 percent listing "job-related" and 17 percent listing "upgrade for retraining" (p. 41). This seems to indicate that a great many potential participants are seeking literacy training to help them advance or succeed in their jobs, as other researchers have noted (Beder & Valentine, 1990). Indeed, a study conducted by Middleton and Bancroft Research and Planning Associates (1999), indicated that 41 percent of respondents expressed employment-related motivations for seeking literacy training. It is clear that course design and promotional activities should focus on the benefits of literacy training to career and job prospects. Some of the other main reasons for seeking literacy training cited by respondents to Long and Middleton's (2001) study include "personal well-being" (14 percent of respondents) and "daily/family/social" reasons (p. 41). All of these aspects of literacy training should be emphasized in promotion and recruitment campaigns.

Breaking down barriers by tapping into motivation: gender differences in motivation

Ziegahn (1991) also points out that men and women tend to have **different motivations** for attending training: when discussing their motivations for seeking literacy training, men in Ziegahn's study were more likely to list the desire to learn about mechanical systems and women were more likely to list a general desire to gain more knowledge. Again, targeted recruitment strategies to both men and women should be pursued.

Self-efficacy and Self-worth

In his article on motivation in learning, Seifert (1996) points out that two essential aspects of self are closely tied to motivation in learning: **self-efficacy and self-worth.** According to Seifert (1996):

> Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief that he or she is capable of performing a task, a perception of competency. It is a confidence judgement about being able to do what is being asked...Students who believe themselves to be capable are more likely to be motivated; those who believe themselves incapable will not be motivated (p. 3).

In other words, potential participants need to feel confident that they can complete the program before they will be motivated to complete it. It is important, therefore, for literacy instructors and program coordinators to be very encouraging and supportive of learners in their programs, to help participants to gain the confidence they need to succeed in literacy training. Promotions can be designed to incorporate testimonials from previous participants who have succeeded at completing the literacy program.

2.6.2 Thinking about motivation when promoting literacy programs

With so many possible motivating factors driving people to seek literacy training, it will be difficult to determine what the focus of course design and promotional campaigns should be. Surveys, focus groups and interviews can be conducted in the community to determine what some of the biggest motivating forces are in potential learners. Because of the prominence of job-related motivations in the research, this should be a major factor in program and promotion design. While general promotion will always be necessary, small, targeted recruitment campaigns that focus on specific motivations will likely be more successful in bringing in new participants for literacy training.

At Kingston Literacy, collaboration with other community agencies occurs at every level of program planning and implementation.

Kingston Literacy Within a Network of Partnerships

Creating a web of partnerships with a number of organizations increases the opportunities for meeting parents, strengthens the community support and lessens the likelihood of families being missed or overlooked. The interactions between an elementary school, Kingston Literacy and the Better Beginnings for Kingston Children (BBKC) program illustrate an effective network of partnerships.

A "Passport to Literacy" Open House at the high-needs school where the Family Literacy Centre is based has taken place for two years. In order to have their name entered into a draw, each family needed a stamp from certain rooms in the school to complete a passport. Our centre was one of the stops where parents could also find out about our services. Delivering RAPP to the families attending BBKC's playgroup in the room next to our centre has also happened periodically for a number of years. Furthermore, a more recent development at the school has been the provision of RAPP for families through BBKC's School Readiness Program and through the junior and senior kindergarten classes. In this case, the Family Literacy Program serves as one of the bridges for families between two other organizations' programs.

2.7 Summary

With the multi-faceted barriers that people face to participation, and the multitude of different problems and issues that communities face on a daily basis, it may seem overwhelming to literacy professionals trying to recruit participants to their programs. It will be necessary to create programs and promotion systems that are flexible and can be adapted to various different groups. Outreach should include general recruitment drives, but should also pursue targeted strategies.

In addition to creating programs and promotions that are focused on drawing specific learners into training, literacy professionals will also have to work hard to fight against barriers to participation in general. Funding and the help of volunteers will be needed to provide program participants with free or subsidized childcare, transportation and, if possible, food. Collaborative efforts with other services and professionals will be necessary in order to work at solving social problems and improving the community environment.

3 – Recruitment and Retention of Participants

3.1 Promotion of Family Literacy Programs

3.2 Recognizing and Preparing for Catalyst Moments in Learners

3.3 Creative Recruitment Strategies

3.4 Retention of Program Participants

3.5 Summary

3.1 Promotion of Literacy Programs

3.1.1 Successful promotional strategies

3.1.2 Creative promotional techniques

3.1.1 Successful promotional strategies

Some traditional outreach and promotion activities include: television, radio and newspaper ads; newsletters; distribution of literacy kits; bus panels; flyers; posters; information nights; outreach programs; word-of-mouth and referral efforts; phone campaigns; and speaking at community events.

3.1.2 Creative promotional techniques

If we are to truly access the hardest-to-reach learners, we must **go beyond the traditional** advertising methods like pamphlet and poster distribution. Indeed, even when using traditional promotions, creativity should be used to ensure that advertising is effective and eye-catching. As with traditional ads, however, non-traditional advertisements still need to be "appropriate to the target audience" (Beder, 1980, p. 22). When promoting to hard-to-reach people, promotions should be focused on specific groups and "frequently repeated" (ibid.).

Some **non-traditional promotion** techniques include: coffee cup, restaurant placemat, car litter bag and grocery bag insert advertising; holding community events and programs specifically for recruitment and promotion; promoting programs at community gathering places like laundromats, coffee shops, internet cafes, thrift shops, bingo halls and auto shops; enlisting the help of taxi drivers to distribute information and promote programs; and advertising at military bases and other places of employment (Sapin & Padak, 1998).

Kingston Literacy recognizes the need for promotion to be varied, clear, direct, repeated and ongoing. In order to have an impact, people need to experience information more than once in different ways.

Promotion Strategies at Kingston Literacy

Door to Door Flyer Runs:

Flyers are effective as a reinforcement or reminder, but it is the connections with families or agencies that make the difference . As a team, we have delivered flyers directly to people's homes and apartment building mailboxes, and some local businesses in concentrated areas. Flyers can be e-mailed or faxed to agencies, but need to be backed up with a phone call to further explain the program. It is even better if staff can hand deliver flyers and perhaps display material to agencies by directly speaking to a pertinent staff person, attending a staff meeting or sharing the information at a parent group.

Promotion by Parents:

When parents register for family literacy programs, we ask them to encourage a friend or a neighbour with young children to call about the program. Sometimes, parents take extra flyers for their building or area. As noted, word-of-mouth is extremely powerful. It is useful to always ask people how they found out about a program; their responses provide insight as to which outreach strategies are effective.

Promotional Material:

Because reducing the barriers parents face is of primary concern, Kingston Literacy's Family Literacy Program has tried to address these issues especially when one long term goal is parent upgrading. Therefore, the promotional material tends to highlight the fact that there is no cost for the training, and that transportation, childcare, and food are available.

Promotion Strategies at Kingston Literacy (cont'd.)

It is important to produce well-thought-out promotional print material that utilizes clear writing techniques. Poorly designed material, perhaps with unclear or extensive text creates yet another barrier for those who have literacy difficulties. One available tool to assist organizations with the creation of material is *Clear Writing and Literacy* (Revised Second Edition), prepared for the Ontario Literacy Coalition by Ruth Baldwin. Aside from print material, other avenues for promotion are radio and television public service announcements or interviews.

Special Events:

At an Open House, parents can view the centre and meet the staff in a casual way. It gives them a reason to stop by; they are able to assess an organization without feeling self-conscious because other families are visiting as well. Such events as a low-key Open House can be held a few times a year, concentrating on a certain area and flooding it with flyers. In 2004, a well-attended neighbourhood Open House took place at the new west end Family Learning Centre as outreach for a number of programs including an intergenerational program (U.P.P.). It was promoted quite heavily in the neighbourhood near the new centre with flyer drops in mailboxes. Any families in the area who had phoned or stopped in to make general inquiries were contacted about the upcoming event. The Open House provided an important forum to inform parents about our programs.

National Family Literacy Day is January 27th. So, for a number of years, Kingston Literacy organized a Family Literacy Day Celebration in conjunction with the Kingston Frontenac Public Library. Last year, we partnered with the Ontario Early Years Centre for the event. Traditionally, other community agencies have joined us on the day; each one providing information about their services and an activity to do with the children.

3.2 Recognizing and Preparing for Catalyst Moments in Learners

3.2.1 Being ready for catalyst moments in learners: active promotion

3.2.2 Building publicity

3.2.1 Being ready for catalyst moments in learners: active promotion

Many people experience "catalyst" moments in their lives: major events that lead them to decide to seek help to improve their literacy skills. Long and Taylor (2002) call these moments "transition points" – times when potential participants "considered the idea [of enrolling in a literacy program], mainly at times of transition, for instance, the birth of children, separation, divorce or the loss of a job" (p. 14). It is very important that, once a learner decides to seek out a training program, he or she can find information easily. Program providers must ensure that their literacy programs are visible and accessible, through the use of outreach, regular promotional advertising, directory listings and prominent learning centre signage.

3.2.2 Building publicity

Publicity is another important aspect of outreach and promotion. In order to generate publicity, program providers need to make contacts with people in the media. Media releases should be distributed regularly, and literacy professionals should enlist the help of the media when promoting new programs. Regular media publicity will help to improve the visibility of a literacy program, and also will help ensure that community members become familiar with new learning opportunities that the program offers.

3.3 Creative Recruitment Strategies

3.3.1 Information distribution networks

2.3.2 Learning brokerage

3.3.3 Creating vibrant learning centres

3.3.4 Outreach programs

3.3.1 Information distribution networks

Setting up an information distribution network can be an excellent way to increase visibility of a literacy program and ensure regular promotion in the community. Pamphlets, brochures, posters, newsletters, course guides and other information sources on the program can be distributed to a network of people, businesses and government agencies on a regular basis. This will require a great deal of work to set up and little work to maintain. The extent to which the business or service will display information for your program will vary, but aim to have the distributor set up a small space in their office or business where a poster, some brochures and the most recent newsletter will be displayed on an on-going basis. Volunteers can help distribute new information every two weeks or once a month. It will be essential to keep up the process of information distribution so that every location on the network always has current information for people to view and take home.

Some of the many community groups, businesses and professionals that can be enlisted to distribute information for the program on a regular basis include:

- hairdressers
- doctors, dentists and public health nurses
- employment centres
- churches
- libraries
- bars, coffee shops, restaurants and grocery stores
- gas stations and repair shops

3.3.2 Learning brokerage

In a report from the United Kingdom by Thomas et al. (2004), the concept of learning brokerage is defined as: "a process undertaken through a network or chain of individuals and institutions" (p. 61). The network or chain is then used as "a means of **building bridges** between potential learners and providers to reach those who have remained excluded from learning" (ibid., p. 8). The concept involves enlisting the help of various different sectors of the community by creating formal and informal relationships with people and groups who then help to recruit new participants to literacy programs. For example, hairdressers can be engaged in informal relationships as contacts who have access to many community members and can encourage participation among them, especially among women (ibid., p. 33).

Learning brokerage takes place "in a **variety of contexts**", such as "the workplace, voluntary sector, communities and the education sector" (ibid., p. 8). Formal arrangements can be made between literacy programs and other social services to provide each other with referrals, and informal arrangements can be made with local employers, business owners and community leaders to serve as liaisons between potential participants and program professionals. The key will be to set up long-term programs so that literacy workers can take the time required to build up partnerships and make contacts with potential brokers.

Three levels of learning brokerage activities identified by Thomas et al. (2004) are: "very informal (suggestion and comment), more formal (providing advice), and strategic (working to change structures)" (p. 61). The idea is to enlist various different people and groups in the community at all three of these levels – some will simply offer help or advice to potential learners wishing to access literacy training, others will help the literacy program to work against societal problems that are creating barriers to participation.

3.3.3 Creating vibrant learning centres

In her resource book for family literacy practitioners in Nova Scotia, Manson (2002) notes: "Attracting families to the program, and maintaining their ongoing participation, require that programs develop activities based on the interests, goals, and needs of perspective participants" (p. 8-6). It will require the help of **volunteers** to ensure that activities and programs designed to bring people through the doors of learning centres do not overshadow or dominate the workload of literacy professionals.

3.3.4 Outreach programs

Creating programs that have the **express purpose of recruiting** participants into other literacy programs can be an effective way to draw new recruits into literacy training (Thomas et al., 2004). The idea is to target specific groups in the community who are likely to have a high rate of low literacy skills and a low rate of participation. Developing programs to bring these learners through the doors of learning centres will involve consultation with group representatives and plenty of experimentation. Recruitment programs should generally be short term, so that resources and energy of the organization are not drained from the main literacy programs that are offered. When running recruitment programs, it is essential that program facilitators and coordinators take the time to meet the participants and get their contact information so that they can be contacted in the future with promotions and new information. The recruitment programs should be more relaxed than regular classes and designed to be fun. Be sure to create opportunities for learners and professionals to meet together and discuss literacy training programs offered by the program.

Kingston Literacy uses programs like the Bookmaking Workshop Series to build connections with other organizations in the community and as a part of their outreach strategy.

Outreach Programs at Kingston Literacy: Bookmaking Workshop Series

Originally, a request came from another adult upgrading agency to do workshops for the learners who brought their children to school and accessed the on-site childcare. Our connection with this organization was established because RAPP was a service they already had utilized over the years. Several individual bookmaking workshops were offered to the group which primarily included English as a Second Language learners. The potential to expand on the concept of making books or learning materials with parents to share with their children was quickly realized.

The hands-on bookmaking workshops were very relaxing and the parents seemed to like that they had something to take home. From there, Kingston Literacy's Family Literacy Program developed a whole bookmaking workshop series. The first full series that was offered utilized space at a community centre run by The Boys and Girls Club. Food, childcare and transportation were built into the expenses. Food played a more significant role because funding was allocated to provide not only a snack at the workshops but also food (e.g., blocks of cheese) for the parents to take home, along with their handmade learning materials.

By making a variety of books and lending similar children's books or RAPP packs, early reading strategies are highlighted and reinforced. Through these hands-on workshops, parents learn how to make low-cost children's books in a comfortable environment. As with other outreach programs, we have always offered a children's program at the same time. Parents enjoy having time to make something for their children and having an opportunity to gather and talk with other parents. In a casual but focused setting, information about early literacy is discussed.

Outreach Programs at Kingston Literacy: Bookmaking Workshop Series (cont'd.)

Shorter bookmaking blitzes have been offered as well as full ten-week series for two hours per week. There is an incredible amount of versatility with the use of these workshops. Even one isolated workshop can be run purely as a service to a partnering organization or it can serve as a promotional tool for an outreach program. A full series of ten workshops can be offered as a self-contained project or as a stepping stone to another program. Parents can even retake the series because the content may not be exactly the same or they may decide to make the same type of resource for a different child in the family. The workshops have a broad appeal with parents. They have been facilitated at church halls, community centres, a school and learning centres.

Bookmaking workshop series have served as an outreach strategy for two parent upgrading models: the one that focused on family literacy as part of regular LBS delivery and the U.P.P. Program that was based on specific family literacy curriculum. The locations for the outreach programs were part of the strategy. One bookmaking series was held right at our adult learning centre, where a parent upgrading program was to take place.

For both outreach bookmaking workshop series, a worker from the Katarokwi Native Friendship Centre took part to understand more about what we do. In the first series, the worker was attending as support for a parent who she felt might not come to the group on her own and who would benefit from an upgrading program. In the second series, another worker attended as a parent. Several bookmaking workshop series were offered at our new Family Learning Centre, where the intergenerational program (U.P.P.) would take place. Two parents who had taken bookmaking workshops at the Family Learning Centre participated in the U.P.P. Program.

3.4 Retention of Program Participants

3.4.1 Main reasons people drop out

3.4.2 Increasing retention rates

3.4.1 Main reasons people drop out

There are several common reasons why people drop out of literacy programs, and these should be examined when developing outreach and promotional strategies. Indeed, there is a **high rate of dropping out** of Canadian literacy programs, and professionals will need to work hard to design courses and facilitate learning in a way that retains participants for the full program length. For example, Long and Middleton (2001), note in their study of callers to literacy programs that 31 percent of respondents who enrolled in a literacy program ending up dropping out before the program completed (p. 66). It is interesting to note that the same study indicates that 39 percent of male respondents, compared to 23 percent of female respondents, dropped out of their programs (ibid.). This seems to indicate that retention strategies are different for male learners.

Out of those respondents to Long and Middleton's (2001) study who **dropped out**, respondents aged 16-24 had the highest dropout rate at 42 percent, while only 17 percent of those aged 45 and older dropped out (ibid., p. 67). Of all those who dropped out of programs, 56 percent listed socioeconomic-circumstantial reasons for dropping out, 27 percent listed program/policy related reasons, 6 percent listed cognitive-emotive reasons, and 10 percent listing other reasons (ibid., p.69) Also interesting to note is, of the respondents who dropped out, 47 percent listed "job-related conflicts", 35 percent cited "money problems" and 29 percent cited "care of children" as the reason why they dropped out (ibid., p. 71). This shows that people have a variety of reasons why they drop out, and they are similar to the reasons why many choose not to enrol at all.

3.4.2 Increasing retention rates

Clearly, the process of reducing barriers to participation and increasing participation rates is **closely tied** to the process of increasing retention rates. Ensuring creative and relevant course content, friendly instructors and a flexible course delivery should help to increase retention rates. Above all, programs need to be aware of the tenuous hold that they have on learners, who are usually "just one circumstance away from dropping out" (ibid., 22). Providing support and encouragement to current participants and trying to help them to deal with problems in their lives will go a long way to keeping learners enrolled in training.

Of course, coordinators and facilitators need to ensure that all participants have adequate childcare and transportation during their time enrolled in programs, so that these common barriers to education will not be a factor in reducing retention rates. In general, however, learners need to find value and benefit in staying enrolled in a program, or it will not take much to lead them away. All aspects of the program need to be focused on delivering practical education that people will find useful to their daily lives, so that they **want to stay** enrolled in programs and will not find excuses to drop out before completion.

3.5 Summary

Promotion, recruitment and retention initiatives should be pursued in a coordinated way in order to attract as many new learners as possible to training programs. A system of direct, targeted promotions, publicity efforts and recruitment programs that single out specific groups should be combined with general promotions that aim at informing large segments of the population about literacy programs. Maintaining information distribution networks, setting up groups of formal and informal "learning brokers" and developing as many contacts in the community as possible will ensure that channels of

communication are in place to inform the public about programs and to increase the likelihood of personal referrals of hard-to-reach learners.

Both traditional and non-traditional promotional techniques should be employed by literacy programs in order to draw in as many different people and groups as possible to literacy programs. Most importantly, however, publicity efforts and information distribution should be initiated regularly to maximize the flow of current program information throughout the community. Program providers should aim to maintain a high level of visibility in the community so that learners are aware of literacy programs when they make the decision to pursue literacy training. Setting up more storefront learning centres, hosting community events and creating special recruitment programs can also help to bridge gaps between small social and community groups and literacy professionals.

4 – Collaboration and Relationship Building

4.1 Building Relationships With Communities and Individuals

4.2 Coordination and Cooperation Between Service Providers

4.3 Summary

4.1 Building Relationships With Communities and Individuals

In order to access social networks and connect with the people who need literacy services the most, it is vital that literacy professionals **build connections** with groups and individuals in the community. Walking around the neighbourhood, distributing pamphlets and introducing yourself, can be a good place to start if you have a brand new program and have no contacts in the service area. Current program participants can be relied upon as a place to start when undertaking the process of building connections with groups and individuals in the area.

The most important aspect of developing personal relationships and contacts in the community is demonstrating that your literacy program is in place for the **long-term** and dedicated to helping to solve problems in the community. When sustainable funding is not available, it will be more difficult to prove to the community that you are there to stay. However, an image of being part of the community and not a temporary program needs to be projected at all times. It will take time for literacy organizations to demonstrate that they are full, lasting partners in the community. Literacy professionals need to work on "proving credibility by demonstrating long-term commitment to the local area" (Thomas et al, 2004, p. 18). This will require getting involved with town hall meetings, local tenant associations, regional planning, health services and any other important aspects of living in the community. In everything the program undertakes, program planners need to ask themselves whether they are working towards the long-term well-being of the community, or simply pursuing short-term interests. However, short-term plans need to be developed and implemented, bearing in mind how they will impact on long-term solutions to local problems.

Collaboration and partnerships help Kingston Literacy to pursue more focused recruitment strategies when necessary.

Focused Recruitment at Kingston Literacy

Outreach programs that are meant for hard-to-reach families will require a more focused recruitment strategy. If a general promotion is done, the program may reach maximum capacity quickly without having included the targeted hard-to-reach group. How do you concentrate your efforts for outreach and promotion, in order to attract parents who may have low literacy skills, limited resources in the home, and limited access to community programs? Community partners are essential in this process.

As with RAPP being taken to community playgroups, part of the promotion plan for hard-to-reach learners can involve offering services through another organization that primarily focuses on families that face a number of barriers. All families associated with the organization have access to the information; individual families are not centred out within groups. By drawing on the knowledge and connections of other organizations, Kingston Literacy has been able to pursue more focused and targeted promotion and outreach initiatives.

4.2 Coordination and Collaboration Between Service Providers

Coordination and collaboration between literacy organizations and local businesses, charities, government services, educational institutions and any other groups working in the community are essential if literacy programs are to be "embedded in their communities and contribute to the **community-building** process" (Smythe & Weinstein, 2000, p. 17). Furthermore, cooperation and integration with other services is necessary to provide families with efficient services and to make "community resources more responsive to family needs" (Thomas, 2001, p.187).

According to Beder (1984a), the most important concept to remember when entering into collaborative agreements with other organizations is "the principle of **reciprocity**" (p. 15). Both parties need to benefit from the arrangements, and written agreements should be created that outline expectations (ibid.). Importantly, both organizations have to enter into collaborative arrangements with an "attitude of mutual respect for each other" (Morrow and Young, p. 741).

There are **different types of arrangements** and relationships that can be developed between community service organizations:

- **Co-sponsorship arrangements** involve offering a program jointly with another organization or institution (Beder, 1984a). For example, a program to promote reading for pleasure among families with young children could be created by a literacy program and the public library.

- **Referral arrangements** between organizations involve both parties referring new learners to each other (ibid.). For example, a literacy organization and a women's health centre may refer clients to each other.

- **Donor-receiver relationships** involve obtaining outright donations for your program in return for in-kind contributions like advertising. (ibid.) For example, a company may donate money to a literacy program in return for having a plaque dedicated to them on the wall of a learning centre.

- **Coordination arrangements** refer to agreements and arrangements that are made between organizations to avoid the repetition of services and to maximize the efficiency of both groups (ibid.). For example, a literacy program and an adult education program might enter into an agreement that states that they will target different segments of the population when performing recruitment and promotional work. Or, two different organizations might target the same group of people at the same time, sharing in each other's knowledge of how to best reach that group.

According to Sapin and Padak (1998), some questions that written collaboration agreements should address include:

- Will one group have any administrative authority over the other?
- How will conflicts be resolved?
- How much funding will be provided by each group?
- How long will the collaborative relationship last?
- How often will the groups meet and where will meetings take place?

Collaboration and partnerships have become an integral part of the programs offered by Kingston Literacy.

Collaborative Strategies at Kingston Literacy

Collaboration with agency partners has become a key element in the operations of Kingston Literacy's Family Literacy Program as opposed to offering programming in isolation. Our partnerships have been mutually beneficial and longstanding. In the attempt to reach families with limited resources or in particular those who have literacy difficulties, it has been an effective strategy to integrate with other organizations where overlapping goals exist. RAPP, for example, has been incorporated into existing services with established reputations. Through this type of reciprocal relationship, we reach new parents and other agencies have their programming enhanced through our workshops and distribution of resources for families. A greater understanding and promotion of services takes place between agencies. In terms of outreach and other agencies making referrals, providing information to them may not always ensure responses, but because of proven partnerships, agencies have been willing to learn more about the outreach and upgrading programs we offer, contemplate how these programs could benefit their participants and highlight them with both staff and clients. Working in conjunction with another agency strengthens the relationship and introduces families to the services of both organizations.

Partnership Options Explored by Kingston Literacy

The connections with a partner can be utilized in a variety of creative ways. In conjunction with another organization, our Family Literacy Program may:

• be involved in their events, such as an Open House

• present an individual workshop at one of their programs (e.g., emergent literacy topic) or be a guest speaker to promote our own services

• invite guest speakers in to discuss pertinent topics (e.g., Health Unit's Early Expressions worker at a parent upgrading program)

• offer a program within their programming (e.g., RAPP at a family resource centre playgroup)

• do a joint project with them (e.g., co-facilitating a workshop series)

• facilitate our own separate program in their space

• offer a program on their behalf in the community (e.g., purchase of service arrangement with the Ontario Early Years Centre)

• run the initial portion of a program in their space, then transfer to a second location such as an adult upgrading centre for the remainder (new idea)

• hold a special event together at their location (e.g., Family Literacy Day at the library or the Ontario Early Years Centre)

• invite one of their staff and participants to attend our program together

• arrange for their staff and participants to tour our agency's adult learning centre

• encourage them to utilize one of our organization's available spaces. They could hold a workshop, program or event at our site, and then opportunities for linkages will present themselves. In fact, the development of the new Family Learning Centre in Kingston West involved a committee of various, pertinent agencies. Kingston Literacy sought the committee's input about the layout of the centre because we wanted the space to suit other agencies' potential programming needs as well as our own.

4.3 Summary

Collaboration and cooperation with other service providers is an important component of a sound outreach and recruitment strategy. Other groups in the community will have more direct and personal access to individuals and families, especially professionals such as social assistance workers, doctors, teachers, child welfare advocates and food bank staff. Only by working with other groups and service providers in the community can literacy professionals hope to make the personal connections necessary to increase participation and draw in the hard-to-reach learners. Indeed, to tackle barriers to participation and social problems in an efficient and holistic manner, literacy programs will need as much help as they can get from other community service groups.

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Appendix A – Glossary

- **Accessibility:** The extent to which those who wish to enrol in literacy programs can find information about programs, contact programs and enrol in the programs with ease and convenience.

- **Learning Brokers:** Individuals and business leaders in the community who serve as a support network for literacy programs and can act as liaisons between program providers and potential participants.

- **Family Literacy:** A broad, intergenerational approach to literacy and literacy training that focuses on parenting and the daily reading and numeracy activities of family life. The approach encourages family members to support each other in daily literacy activities.

- **Marketing:** The process of conducting research, surveys, interviews, demographic studies and other endeavours aimed at determining the size, nature and educational needs of your target audience. It involves designing course content to serve the needs of your target audience.

- **Outreach:** The process of reaching out to the community and connecting with individuals and groups for consultation, promotion and recruitment purposes.

- **Participation:** The process of taking part in literacy training programs and the extent to which people in the general population or in specific communities are taking part in literacy training programs.

- **Promotion:** The process of advertising programs, informing the public and spreading information about what you have available for learners.

- **Recruitment:** The process of identifying and connecting with potential participants to try to persuade them to enrol in literacy training.

- **Retention:** The extent to which those who start literacy programs finish them.

- **Visibility:** The extent to which people are aware of a literacy program's existence: its prominence in the community and the effectiveness of its promotions and information distribution efforts.

Appendix B – Acronyms

ABLE - Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

ALSO - Alternative Learning Styles and Outlooks (small community program in downtown Ottawa)

BBKC - Better Beginnings for Kingston Children program (funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care)

CLCK - Community Learning Centre Kingston (Kingston Literacy)

ECE - Early Childhood Education

FLAG - Family Literacy Action Group of Alberta

GED - General Education Development or High School Equivalency Certificate

IALS - International Adult Literacy Survey – 1994 UNESCO survey of 23 countries, including Canada, to determine literacy levels in the general population. Other rounds of data collection were performed in 1996 and 1998.

IRA - International Reading Association

LAN - Learner's Advisory Network (a committee of MCL)

LBS - Literacy and Basic Skills

MCL - Movement for Canadian Literacy

NALD - National Adult Literacy Database

NLS - National Literacy Secretariat

OLC - Ontario Literacy Coalition

OEY/OEYC - Ontario Early Years/Ontario Early Years Centre

PACT - Parents and Children Together – structured time for parents and children to interact, learn and play together

PRINTS - Parents' Roles Interacting with Teacher Support – program offered by Kingston Literacy

U.P.P. - Upgrading for Parents with Preschoolers - program offered by Kingston Literacy

RAPP - Reading and Parents Program – offered by Kingston Literacy, this program involves distributing "RAPP Packs", full of books, crafts and other learning tools, to encourage family literacy development.

Appendix C – List of Common Barriers to Participation in Literacy Programs

Barriers can exist within the learner:

- fear of disclosure of literacy problems to the community
- fear of failing the literacy course
- negative expectations about the nature of the program
- negative or traumatic previous educational experiences
- lack of perceived need for literacy training
- feel too old to enrol in literacy training
- fear of the teacher or the other participants in the program
- lack of knowledge of the existence of literacy programs
- inability to speak English or French
- drug or alcohol problems
- mental health issues

Barriers can also exist that are external to the learner:

- lack of transportation to the program
- lack of child or elder care
- financial problems
- conflict with work or family schedule
- illness or injuries
- crime and insecurity in the community

Barriers can also exist within social, cultural and family environments:

- unsupportive or hostile friends and family members
- cultural expectations that women should stay in the home
- low value placed on literacy skills in cultural, social or family networks
- chronic poverty or unemployment
- problems with violence and abuse

Many barriers can also exist that originate within the literacy programs:

- unfriendly or unknowledgeable front-line support staff
- unfriendly or ineffective program facilitators or tutors
- lack of required facilitators, volunteers or tutors
- lack of one-to-one support in programs
- lack of community consultation on the course content or design
- irrelevant or unhelpful course content
- inconvenient class schedules for target community
- programs that require too great a time commitment
- intimidating, intrusive or excessive registration procedures
- heavy use of testing and evaluation of new participants
- unsafe, uncomfortable or unsanitary facilities

(Beder, 1990; Beder, 1991a; Cross, 1981; Hart, Long, Breslauer & Slosser, 2002; Hayes, 1990; Levine, 1986; Long & Middleton, 2001; Long & Taylor, 2002; Martini & Page, 1996; Middleton & Bancroft Planning and Research Associates, 1999; Scanlan & Darkenwald, 1984; Ziegahn, 1991)

Appendix D – Categorizing Barriers to Participation

Categorizing Barriers to Participation

1. Cross: three categories of barriers
2. Scanlan & Darkenwald: deterrent factors in continuing education
3. Beder: four categories of barriers
4. Long & Middleton: three categories of barriers
5. Hart et al.: diversionary and intervening factors

1.) Cross: three categories of barriers

According to Cross (1981), three categories should be considered when thinking about barriers to participation: **situational, dispositional and institutional**. The situational barriers that Cross lists include: the cost of a program; job responsibilities; child care needs; unsupportive friends or families; and not having time for a program. The dispositional barriers that Cross lists include: feeling too old for the program; being tired of school; not wanting to look too ambitious; not knowing what participating would lead to; not having enough energy; and low confidence in ability. Cross lists institutional barriers as the following: not having the desire to go to school full-time; considering the program too long; inconvenient schedule; unavailable courses; entrance requirements that are too difficult; the fact that the program won't lead to a diploma; and not being able to find information on programs.

2.) Scanlan & Darkenwald: six deterrent factors in continuing education

Other researchers have looked at barriers to participation in terms of forces that lead people away from education. Scanlan and Darkenwald (1984) identify the following deterrent factors for adults who did not participate in continuing education: **disengagement, lack of quality, family constraints, cost, lack of benefits and work constraints**. Disengagement includes: lack of energy, low confidence or unsupportive friends. Lack of quality refers to the belief that the program is of poor quality. Family and work constraints include conflicts with work schedules, lack of childcare and objections from spouses or employers. Costs might include books, tuition or transportation. Lack of benefits refers to a belief that the program will not provide enough benefits to be worth the effort.

3.) Beder: four categories of barriers

In his study of nonparticipation in adult basic education programs, Beder (1990) identifies four categories of barriers to participation: **low perception of need, perceived effort, dislike for school, and situational barriers**. Beder developed these categories based on 175 responses to a telephone survey of Iowa adults who had not completed high school and had never enrolled in an adult education program. Under the category of low perception of need, Beder includes the following responses: feeling that education would not improve life; having no use for literacy skills; having no energy for participation; feeling too old; thinking it would take too long; and not feeling motivated to attend a program. For the perceived effort category, Beder lists: program too expensive; not feeling smart enough; feeling it would be like repeating high school; feeling it would take too long; and feeling that friends would not approve. Under the dislike for school category, Beder cites feeling too lazy for school, and not liking school in general. For situational barriers, Beder includes: not having enough free time; having to take care of family; and having conflicts with work.

4.) Long & Middleton: three categories of barriers

Long and Middleton (2001), in their study of participation in Canadian literacy programs, identify three categories of barriers to participation: **socioeconomic-circumstantial, cognitive-emotive, and program/policy related**. According to Long and Middleton, socioeconomic-circumstantial barriers can include financial problems; conflict with work; health problems; lack of childcare; and "systemic and political factors beyond individual control" (p.22). Cognitive-emotive barriers can include: the desire for secrecy; internalized stigma; negative perceptions or attitudes towards education and towards those with low-literacy; and "low self-confidence and fear of failure" (ibid.). Program/policy related barriers stem from the program itself and can include: lack of visibility; inappropriate course content in terms of skill level or social and cultural values; intrusive enrolment procedures; and poor "physical conditions" (p.24).

5.) Long & Taylor: diversionary and intervening factors

In Long and Taylor's (2002) study of non-participant adults, the authors discuss **diversionary and intervening factors** affecting participation. They describe diversionary factors as influencing a person's life path away from education, and intervening factors as those forces that prevent someone from enrolling in a program after they think about taking one. According to Long and Taylor, diversionary factors include: feeling that literacy is irrelevant; feeling that the program runs against cultural values; being in a cultural group that does not value literacy; and having no perception of need for literacy training. Intervening factors include: lack of awareness of programs; childcare responsibilities; nervousness about school; money problems; and "work-related conflicts" (p. 14).

Appendix E - Resources on the World Wide Web

Links accurate as of August, 2004

ABC Canada Foundation for Literacy
http://www.abc-canada.org/

"ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation is a national charity committed to **promoting literacy** to the general public and to the private sector."

Directory of Canadian Adult Literacy Research in English
http://www.nald.ca/crd/

Search for **English publications** on adult literacy research in Canada:
http://www.nald.ca/crd/common/search.asp

International Adult Literacy Survey Database (Statistics Canada)
http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-588-XIE/ials-eiaa.htm

Provides a search engine for qualitative and quantitative data from the **International Adult Literacy Survey**.

Movement for Canadian Literacy
http://www.literacy.ca/

See contact information for the **Learner's Advisory Network (LAN),** which is a network of adults who, at one point, experienced difficulty with literacy. These learner representatives form a committee for the Movement for Canadian Literacy, providing input and learner perspectives to literacy programs and governments across Canada. http://www.literacy.ca/lan/know.htm

Resources on the World Wide Web (cont'd.)

National Adult Literacy Database
http://www.nald.ca/

"A single-source, comprehensive, up-to-date and easily accessible **database** of adult literacy programs, resources, services and activities across Canada."

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (U.K.)
http://www.niace.org.uk/

Read the **current awareness bulletins** for recent publications:
http://www.niace.org.uk/information/LatestInfo/Default.htm

National Literacy Secretariat
http://www.nald.ca/nls.htm

Search the **online catalogue** for literacy publications:
http://www.nald.ca/nls/inpub/OCLC.htm

Skills and Education Network (U.K.)
http://senet.lsc.gov.uk/index.cfm

Read **reviews of recent publications:**
http://senet.lsc.gov.uk/reviews/reviews.cfm