

Student Services in Adult Literacy

Increasing awareness for successful outcomes

Referral systems in Quebec

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Foreward

This report was prompted by response in the Montreal area to the English language LEARN campaign, an initiative of [ABC CANADA](#), a national, non-governmental organization whose mandate is to raise awareness of adult literacy issues. There is a need for ongoing study of the campaign's impact to provide guidelines for future initiatives in literacy.

Recognizing that too few adults were aware of literacy services available to them, [ABC CANADA](#) introduced the LEARN campaign to reach Canadian adults in 1994. The media campaign began in English with a series of TV, radio, magazine and newspaper ads as well as posters and outdoor ads. A French campaign followed. The tag line of all English ads is, "Look in your Yellow Pages™ under LEARN." This directs people to an easy-to-read ad in local Yellow Pages™ directories. In the Montreal area, this page lists the telephone number of Literacy Partners of Quebec (LPQ) as the referral service. LPQ then refers callers to one or more of several appropriate service providers closest to their homes or workplaces.

Outside Montreal, the page lists the telephone number of a local literacy group as the referral service. It is important to note that in several areas in Quebec there are no English Yellow Pages™ published. As a result, even where there are English-Quebecers and English literacy services available to them, there is no mechanism for the LEARN campaign to direct people to these services. This is the case in places like the Gaspé and Rivière du Loup, where adults needing literacy services in English must rely on other means of learning about access to these services.

Shortly after LEARN ads began running, Literacy Partners of Quebec noticed a significant increase in callers requesting information about services. When callers were asked how they heard about the LEARN line in Montreal, a large majority indicated that it was as a result of the LEARN media campaign. It was clear that the campaign was having a definite impact in the Montreal area. This led to questions about what happened after callers made the initial call and about long-term results. We could only look for answers through systematic research. This report is the outcome of that research. Our findings indicate that while the LEARN campaign generates a large number of calls in the Montreal area relative to the size of the English population from which we draw, only a small percentage actually take the next step in the process and make a second call to a provider. While the research has answered some of our questions, it raised a series of additional issues:

- The need for encouraging callers after the initial contact
- The place of ESL in literacy
- Standards of recruitment for tutors and tutor support
- Prevention, as is evidenced by the number of parents who call for help for their children

[ABC CANADA](#) produced an excellent national report in 1996 on the impact of the LEARN campaign.

Because we are not aware of any other comprehensive studies on outcomes in other provinces, it is difficult to determine whether the results of our findings are particular to Quebec or whether they can be generalized to literacy situations elsewhere. We do know that our findings reflect previous research on learners' reluctance to commit themselves. Past research on retention rates also indicate that very few people actually stay with a program over extended periods of time. Instead, people drop in and out of programs at various times in their lives.

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) indicates that people with the lowest literacy levels do not often self identify; others are more likely to recognize their need for help. Our research does not comment on this because we have no way of knowing callers' reading levels, but we do know that the majority of our callers are employed and functioning in some capacity. This confirms IALS findings on employment status of people seeking help.

Our study leads us to conclude that promoting and sustaining a positive climate for learning requires a collaborative approach and an openness to new ideas and partnerships. We hope that the study will seed discussion and response among providers in Quebec. We also hope that it will inform further research in other provinces for it raises questions that the literacy community must answer if they are to meet the needs of people who wish to upgrade their basic skills.

Literacy Partners of Quebec
September 1997

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Literacy Partners of Quebec

September 1997

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Introduction

In December 1996,¹ I was hired by Literacy Partners of Quebec to carry out a needs assessment of the telephone referral process in Quebec. The goal of the research was to determine the efficacy of the referral process in Quebec with specific on follow-up calls made to the Montreal region LEARN Line (hereafter referred to as the LEARN Line).

The mandate for this research project was to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the referral process. The study aimed to determine which aspects of the LEARN Line process worked effectively and which areas needed refinement. The study examines what happens after the initial call to the LEARN Line is made; whether or not callers continue on to the next stage and why; if not, why not, and how successful callers are in accessing the services they require. The study also looks at what conditions led to positive outcomes in an attempt to identify patterns of success as well as areas where improvement is needed.

The initial mandate also asked the researcher to provide information as supplied by respondents about specific literacy service providers. This information was to be given in confidential reports to specific providers to enable them to analyze their own provision by building on strengths and addressing weaknesses. The large report was to have contained general comments of respondents not attributed to any provider in particular. However some respondents (students and sometimes even volunteers) were unable to remember which service provider they had called. It was not therefore possible to attribute comments to a specific provider.

When referrals are made, two or three service providers are given to the caller when possible. This is done for several reasons. First, giving the callers the power to make their own choice and not imposing a provider upon them is important. Second, the LEARN Line operator often does not have the most recent information about tutor availability in various groups because this changes frequently. Availability is strongly linked to tutor training sessions which providers schedule at their discretion. Giving at least one alternate number is intended to promote a more positive attitude at this early stage for potential students. Finally, more than one option is provided in case the student/tutor match does not work or the student would like to seek help elsewhere.

These are all very good reasons for providing more than one referral number but, as a result it was impossible to go back and verify which provider the respondent was talking about. Consequently, it was difficult to attribute either positive or negative responses to a specific literacy service provider. Therefore the results and recommendations of this study have been generalized for all service providers.

The study also includes analysis of telephone interviews with the directors at eight regional literacy councils across Quebec. The goal of these interviews was to gain a general overview of their referral procedures.

An interesting element of this study is that only one perspective was obtained from respondents both in and outside Montreal. For the Montreal LEARN Line, only students and tutors were interviewed. No information was obtained from the literacy service providers as this study examines only the referral process. For information about the regional literacy councils only administrators were interviewed, as they are responsible for referral in their respective areas. In further research it would be very interesting to speak with the administrators in the Montreal area and with the students in the regions to observe the various perspectives to determine similarities and differences.

Methodology

It was established that phone interviews would be the most effective way of gathering information because they are more cost-effective and practical than face-to-face interviews and more personal than mail-in questionnaires. The respondents for this survey were individuals who had telephoned the LEARN Line during the twenty-four month period between March 1, 1994 and February 29, 1996. There were 393 calls made to the LEARN Line during this time period. The researcher attempted to reach all 393 and succeeded in interviewing 140 individuals. Of those, 123 provided information relevant to this study.

It was difficult to actually make contact with the individuals targeted for this survey. Many of those targeted had moved since they initially called or were never home when called. Calls were made on different days and at different times of the day. Due to assurances of confidentiality, it was not possible to leave a message for people when they were not at home and they were subsequently left out of this study after a minimum of two attempts to contact them.

Once contact was made, the telephone interviews lasted anywhere from five to thirty minutes. In general, the interviews were approximately ten minutes long. After an explanation as to the purpose of the call, respondents were asked if they would mind answering some questions. All of the respondents who provided information were quite pleased to do so. In fact, they often expressed gratitude that someone had even bothered to call and check up on them.

Of the 140 attempts, 17 did not provide information for the following reasons:

Would not provide any information	3% (n = 4)
Denied having ever called the LEARN Line	1% (n = 2)
Did not remember calling or what happened	6% (n = 8)
Could not speak English or French	2% (n = 3)

The results of the research are divided into four segments. The first gives a general overview of the main demographic findings of the survey. The second discusses responses from callers who called the LEARN Line for themselves (as students). The third discusses responses from callers who were calling to find services for someone other than themselves. Finally, the fourth discusses responses of individuals who called to volunteer their services. In each of these segments the results are first described. Then, where necessary, the results are displayed graphically in a pie-chart as basic percentages. Interpretation and recommendations based on the findings follow.

Another section of the report discusses the results of interviews with the directors of eight regional literacy councils. The report ends with a summary of recommendations and conclusions.

A questionnaire was designed as a guide for the phone interviews but conversations were left open enough so that respondents could provide additional information if they wished. This information* was recorded on the respondent's form. An intake form is used by the Montreal LEARN Line to record information when callers make the initial call. An example of the interview protocol, the respondent's form and the intake form are included in Appendices A, B and C respectively.

** Not all information was provided by all respondents and in some cases (such as source of LEARN Line number) respondents provided two or more responses. The result is that total "n"s and percentages may not always equal total respondents contacted.*

Results

1

Who Calls the LEARN Line?

The results reported in this section apply to all categories of callers. Some general demographic facts are provided - data which apply across all categories of callers. Subsequent sections are more specific and detailed, as they pertain to homogenous groups of callers.

During the twenty-four month period between March 1, 1994 and February 29, 1996, 393 individuals called the Montreal LEARN Line. The researcher called each of these people and reached 140 (36 per cent) of them.

Of the 140 respondents who were interviewed for this study, 12 per cent (n=17) would not or could not provide any information, leaving a total of 123 respondents upon whom the results of this study are based. The breakdown of the total 140 calls follows.

Individuals who called the LEARN Line:

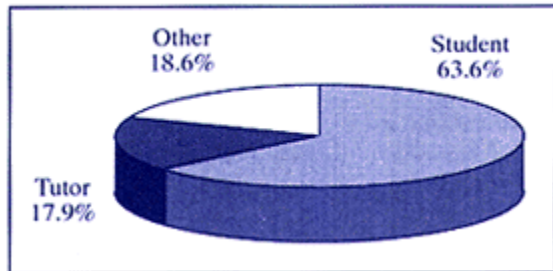
<i>On their own behalf as adult learners</i>	64% (n =89)
<i>To volunteer their time</i>	18% (n =25)
<i>On behalf of someone else</i>	19% (n = 26)

The remaining 253 (64 per cent) callers break down as follows:

<i>No phone number given</i>	9% (n = 37)
<i>Wrong number</i>	21% (n = 82)
<i>Out of service</i>	10% (n = 39)
<i>Could not be reached</i>	22% (n = 88)
<i>Repeat callers .</i>	1% (n = 5)
<i>"Do not call " notation on the intake form</i>	0.5% (n = 2)

(see Figure 1)

Only 31 per cent (n=35) of total callers contacted received the services for which they initially called the LEARN Line. A large number, 69 percent (n= 88), did not pursue the services they initially sought from the LEARN Line. Despite referrals, phone numbers and recommendations from the LEARN Line operator, these people still did not get to the next step. Service providers therefore never knew that these individuals had been referred.



(Figure 1) Who calls the LEARN Line?

It is important to determine why people do not pursue help after they make the initial phone call to the LEARN Line. Many respondents expressed embarrassment when explaining their problem; having to explain the same story again and again may be expecting too much from some people. Perhaps having to make a second phone call to reach a provider deters people from moving ahead. This may be more than some are willing or able to do. Nearly all respondents (n=123) were very happy with the information they received from the LEARN Line, so it can be concluded that the information they are receiving is meeting their needs.

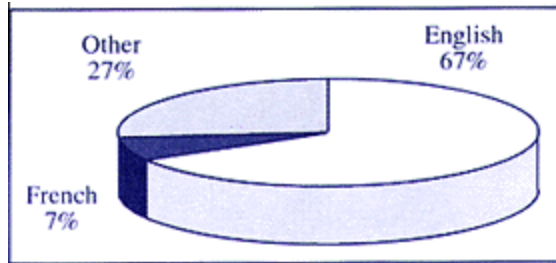
When asked why they did not continue, respondents gave varied answers such as:

- I got a job
- I changed my mine
- I got pregnant
- I had a baby
- Too expensive
- Ill health

One in five callers requested the LEARN Line number again after being contacted for this research.

Results

The vast majority (67 per cent) of LEARN Line callers said that English was their first language. There was a fairly large percentage (26 per cent) of callers who had neither English nor French as their first language and a very small percentage of francophone callers (7 per cent).



(Figure 2) First-language of LEARN Line callers

A number of the students who were interviewed attended classes offered by various local school boards. Some complained that there were too many students in their classes who did not speak English and were there for help with English as a Second Language (ESL). They asked questions such as, "How am I supposed to learn if they don't even speak English?"

Two of the tutors who actually followed through with the process and were matched with students said that they stopped tutoring after a very short while because they were not interested in teaching ESL. They said that they were not trained for ESL work nor was that the reason they volunteered in the first place.

We now have an overall picture of the characteristics of respondents in this study. We know who calls, why they call and, briefly, what happens after they call. The following three segments contain in-depth results for the three different categories of callers. Each segment comprises results as well as interpretations and recommendations.

Recommendations

1 At most, two months after the initial call and sooner if possible, a follow-up call should be made by the operator of the LEARN Line to find out if the caller pursued services to the next level. Perhaps a follow-up call reminding and encouraging the student would reduce the number of callers who never pursue services after their initial call to the LEARN Line. Further proof of this can be found in the fact that 20 per cent or 25 respondents (20 students; 4 tutors; 1 for someone else) requested the LEARN Line number again from the researcher because they were encouraged to once again try and get help or to become tutors after the follow up phone conversation. Due to assurances of confidentiality, it is not possible for the LEARN Line to give the caller's name and number to the service providers in order for them to call the student directly.

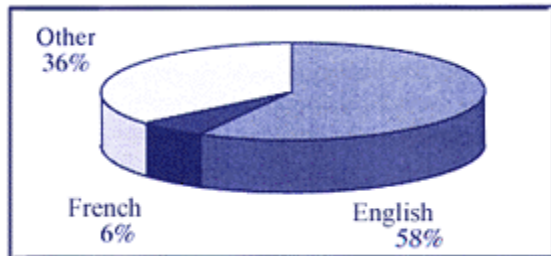
2 It is difficult to refuse services to individuals seeking help, but English literacy classes and tutors should not be used for individuals who are not anglophone. Non-anglophone students who call the LEARN Line should be given the number of one or two language schools or be directed to the proper place in the Yellow Pages™. The literacy resources available are intended for people struggling in English when it is their first language and not for people wishing to improve their second or third language.

Results

2

Student callers

The largest group of individuals calling the LEARN Line were those seeking help for themselves. A total of 89 respondents were reached in this group. Of the 89 people who called the LEARN Line seeking services for themselves, 57 per cent (n=51) were female and 43 per cent (n=38) were male. The percentage of people who spoke English as a first language dropped for this group (58 per cent) to a little over half. The rest of the callers were either French speaking (6 per cent) or spoke a language other than English or French (36 per cent).



(Figure 3) First-language of students calling the LEARN Line.

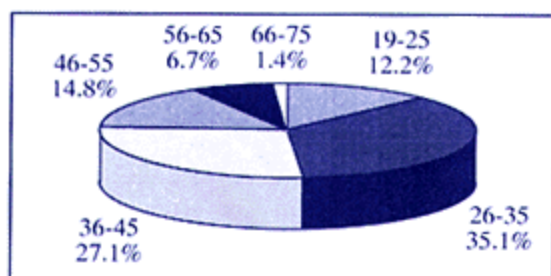
Among these 89, there were callers who:

<i>Did not remember calling</i>	8% (n = 7)
<i>Refused to answer any questions</i>	3% (n = 3)
<i>Denied ever having called the LEARN Line</i>	2% (n = 2)
<i>Could speak neither English nor French</i>	3% (n = 3)

The individuals who could speak neither English nor French could not provide any information for this study. Even though it is safe to assume that they did not receive any services, they are not included for obvious reasons. This leaves a total of 74 respondents upon whom the results in this section are based, unless otherwise indicated. Of these 74 respondents:

- 42% (n=31) *received services*
- 32% (n = 24) *did not pursue services after the initial call to the LEARN Line*
- 7% (n = 5) *pursued but did not receive services*
- 5% (n = 4) *said that no one called them back*
- 14% (n = 10) *had called looking for services not available via the LEARN Line*

The majority (62 per cent, n=46) of the callers were between the ages of 26 and 45 years. This should be one of the factors taken into consideration when designing advertising campaigns, assigning tutors, designing materials, etc (*see Figure 4*).



(Figure 4) Age of students calling the LEARN Line

When asked where the respondent found the number for the LEARN Line, the following responses were given:

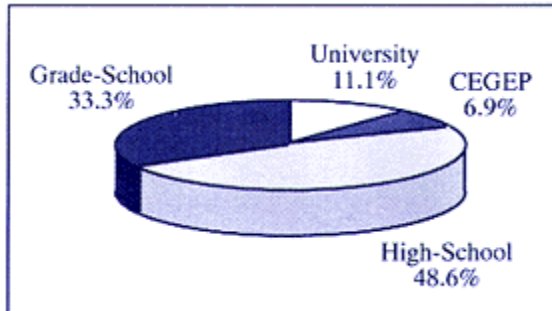
Television	51%	(n = 38)
Radio	33%	(n = 25)
The Gazette	4%	(n = 3)
Yellow Pages	5%	(n = 4)
Other source	7%	(n = 5)

The percentage of respondents receiving the information from the radio and television ads may in fact be higher than cited above since these advertisements direct people to the Yellow Pages™. The 33 percent who cited Yellow Pages™ had to have learned about it from one of these media. The percentage of respondents directed to the LEARN Line may be as high as 37 per cent for radio and 84 per cent for television (*see Figure 7*).

The television advertisements are clearly a well-placed and effective means of communicating information and recruiting students and tutors. Broadcast media are more effective than print for student recruitment.

After eliminating the individuals who were seeking information not available through the LEARN Line, there remain 64 individuals who provided clear and relevant information. Of these, 31 respondents went on to the next step after their initial call to the LEARN Line and received services in some form; 24 respondents did not pursue services after their initial telephone call to the LEARN Line; five respondents pursued but did not receive services. Four respondents reported that they did try to reach someone at a provider service, but that no one called them back.

Results

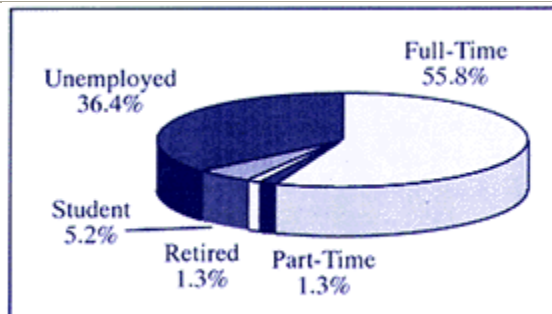


(Figure 5) Student level of education

Of the 31 respondents who received services, only five students are still involved in classes or working with a tutor. Many of the students stopped due to illness, lack of time, feeling that they were not being treated well, or tutor unavailability. Two of the students who were enrolled in school board classes indicated that they stopped because there were too many people in the class who did not speak English. Some students reported that their tutors stopped tutoring with no intervention from the service provider with which they were affiliated. According to the student in one situation, a tutor moved and the student was subsequently left without a tutor.

The five students still receiving help are Generally happy with the help they are getting, They said:

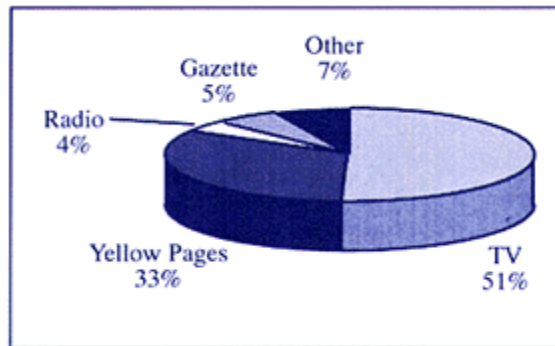
- I'm learning!
- It's very helpful



(Figure 6) Student employment status

Clearly though, five satisfied students is an insufficient number of satisfied students.

As indicated earlier, the reasons why certain individuals do not take the next step after their initial phone call to the LEARN Line are beyond the scope of this study. It is apparent that follow-up calls would be an important step in alleviating this problem, as would more comprehensive tutor training and follow up support for tutors. Respondents in this study all started out with a keen motivation to learn; it is up to the LEARN Line operators and the literacy service providers to nurture this motivation.



(Figure 7) Source of LEARN Line number for students

Recommendations

- 1** The age of the respondent group should be one of the factors taken into consideration when designing advertising campaigns, assigning tutors, designing materials, etc.
- 2** In order to make these campaigns even more effective, it is recommended that the advertisements be more specifically targeted. Making the advertisements clearer as to their target audience and the services that can be obtained would likely enhance their effectiveness. There were, for example, ten people or 14 per cent of callers who had called the LEARN Line thinking it was meant for something other than literacy. Clearer advertisements may help to eliminate this problem.
- 3** Improvements need to be made in order to ensure that students who want services actually receive them. The students contacted for this study were generally keen on getting help. However, they were also easily discouraged.

3

Individuals who called on behalf of someone else

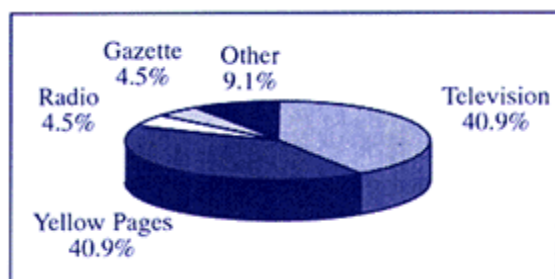
Of the total 140 respondents in this survey, 18 per cent (n=26) were individuals who had called the LEARN Line seeking help for someone other than themselves. Demographic information such as age, education, employment status, etc., for this group of callers is not particularly relevant since respondents were not the actual students but rather the individual who had called on their behalf. Furthermore, many of the individuals were no longer in contact with the learners for whom they had called.

The majority of callers were women (88 per cent, n=23) calling for a child (42 per cent, n=11) or husband (23 per cent, n=6). The majority of callers (73 per cent, n=19) identified English as their first language, 11 per cent (n=3) identified French as their first language and 15 per cent (n=4) had neither English nor French as their first language.

When asked where the respondent found the number for the LEARN Line, the following responses were given:

<i>Television</i>	41%	(n = 9)
<i>Yellow Pages</i>	41%	(n = 9)
<i>Radio</i>	4.5%	(n = 1)
<i>The Gazette</i>	4.5%	(n = 1)
<i>Other source</i>	9%	(n = 2)

As noted in the previous section, the percentage of respondents receiving the information from the radio and television may in fact be higher than cited above, since these advertisements direct people to the Yellow Pageant. The percentage of respondents directed to the LEARN Line may be as high as 45 per cent for radio and 82 per cent for television. Television advertising is clearly an effective means of making the public aware of available services (*see Figure 8*).



(Figure 8) Source of LEARN Line number

Almost half of the calls were made by mothers seeking help for their children who were having difficulty in school. These mothers were looking for outside help as they were either dissatisfied with the help their children were receiving at school or they wanted additional help. These children were either dyslexic or had learning and emotional problems (19 per cent, $n=5$). The parents seemed to be reaching out wherever they could to find help. The problems these children had are not within the scope of literacy services available through the adult sector. Literacy councils are generally not mandated to deal with these problems. The callers also complained about the cost of the diagnostic testing (where available) and chose not to use these services.

Of the 26 referrals to adults in this sample, five individuals (19 per cent) went on for help and reported fairly successful results. This is an encouraging finding, given how few student callers in the Montreal area received help.

- My reading has improved a lot
- It was wonderful. I now read every day

Recommendations

The majority of callers requesting help for someone else were made on behalf of a child. Even though tutoring children is not within the scope of literacy services available, more referral numbers would be helpful to these parents who are often frustrated and seeking an understanding ear. Being given some resources may help them and their children.

4

Individuals who called to volunteer

Twenty-five respondents interviewed for this study called the LEARN Line to volunteer their services as a tutor. It is important to remember that the LEARN Line is but one avenue for recruiting tutors. The councils and other providers also do their own recruiting and their experiences with tutors may be different than those determined by this study.

Of the 25 people who called the LEARN Line expressing an interest in tutoring, one could not remember what happened subsequent to that call, and one refused to answer any questions. Of the remaining 23 callers, eight took a training course and only six were ever matched with a student. Of these six, none is still tutoring and one person is still volunteering as a member of a provider's fund-raising committee. The tutors were generally pleased with the training they received; however there were complaints about the paucity of materials and support provided. Among the complaints were:

- They didn't seem to care about what happened
- Very little supervision or help
- Some books were available but little real help
- Very little support

The study also found that a significant number of people who called the LEARN Line did not follow through. This needs to be explored further. What is it that is stopping people from going forward? Why do some people take the training and then withdraw before they are even matched with a student? The majority of respondents did not even get past the initial phone call to the LEARN Line. When asked why they did not continue, they indicated that the amount of time needed to commit to tutoring was a factor. Two individuals also said that providers required potential tutors to pay for their training and they felt that the cost was too high.

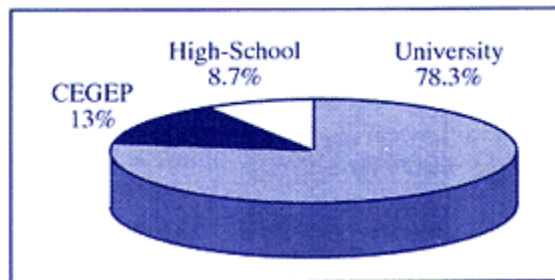
Of the six tutors who were matched, one was expecting to leave the province so never asked to be matched with a student. Another tutored for approximately eight months but then became too busy to continue. Two others became frustrated by the unreliability of their students and stopped tutoring; however, the provider was not informed of the tutors' reason for stopping. The two remaining tutors had a total of four students over a period of two to seven months, but these students were not anglophone and the tutors became disenchanted and stopped tutoring. Among their comments were:

- It was frustrating that students kept leaving
- I didn't really want to do ESL
- I didn't have the tools

Based on the interviews, it appears that too many of the remaining respondents were individuals who did not take the task seriously and were looking for ways to pass their time. The reasons why people volunteer are beyond the scope of this study, but it seemed to the researcher as if too many of the individuals in this study had issues of their own that they could not deal with and were in no position to help anyone else.

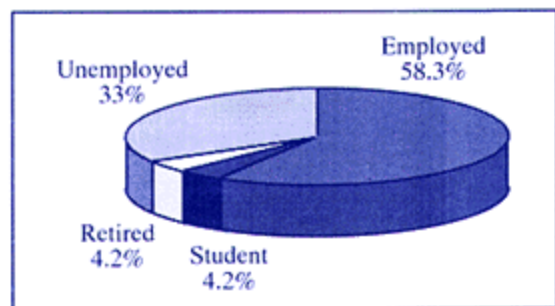
Results

The majority, 81 per cent (n=21) of respondents interested in being tutors were females. Though the majority of total calls were also made by females, the percentage is highest for those calling to volunteer as tutors. The majority of respondents who called to tutor had either graduated from university or are currently university students (*see Figure 9*).



(Figure 9) Tutor level of education

The majority of respondents calling to volunteer as tutors were employed either full or part-time.

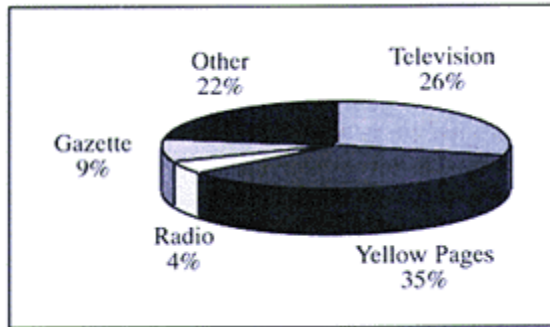


(Figure 10) Employment status of tutors

When asked where they found the number for the LEARN Line, respondents gave the following responses:

Television	26%	(n = 6)
Yellow Pages	35%	(n = 8)
Radio	4%	(n = 1)
The Gazette	9%	(n = 2)
Other source	22%	(n = 5)

As noted earlier, the percentage of respondents receiving the information from the radio and television may in fact be higher than cited above. The percentage of respondents directed to the LEARN Line may be as high as 39 per cent for radio and 61 per cent for television. It is interesting that for this group, there is a significant number of people, 22 percent, who found out about the LEARN Line from a source other than the electronic media.



(Figure 11) Source of LEARN Line number for tutors

There are clearly some problems in the areas of tutor recruitment, training and support. These individuals are representing the literacy service provider and are meant to help students. The few able and dedicated tutors who were interviewed for this study did not continue as tutors due to lack of support, student unreliability or language issues. Literacy service providers need to do a better job of supporting these individuals and ensuring that they have the ability to carry out their responsibilities in a conscientious and supportive fashion.

Recommendations

- 1** Adequate support should be provided to the 1 tutors. Tutors should not be required to pay for training or materials. Individuals who are willing to volunteer their time should not be asked to pay for training or materials.
- 2** Materials should be provided for the tutors.
- 3** The various literacy councils should utilize a more stringent screening process when considering people as tutors. Although important, a willingness to volunteer is not enough to qualify as a tutor; people should have the commitment, maturity and ability required to do so effectively.
- 4** Media campaigns (television, print, etc.) utilized to attract tutors should be targeted to the type of tutors the organization is seeking. They should emphasize the criteria that are required of a tutor thereby attracting suitable tutors from the outset.
- 5** Attempts should be made to attract more male tutors, since there should be an equitable number of men available if a student states a preference as to the gender of their tutor.
- 6** Non-anglophone students should not be accepted for literacy tutoring or literacy classes.

Regional Councils

Regional Councils across Quebec

Telephone interviews were conducted with the directors of the following eight regional literacy councils.

- Châteauguay Valley Reading Council
- Gaspésie Literacy Council
- Huntington Community Learning Centre
- Laurentian Literacy Council
- Quebec City Reading Council
- St. Francis Literacy Council
- Western Quebec Literacy Council
- Yamaska Literacy Council

An interesting factor to be considered when reading the results of this study are the findings of a national research study entitled "The Impact of ABC CANADA'S LEARN Campaign," published by [ABC CANADA](#) in July 1996. That study also surveyed the above regional councils and their findings were quite different than the findings of this study. The [ABC CANADA](#) research reports positive remarks about the effectiveness of the LEARN Line.

- Our calls have increased 20% - 30%
- I know people are responding to it
- Very worthwhile
- We feel it is a wonderful idea

-July 1996

In direct contrast to these positive results, representatives of the same regional councils interviewed for this study were quite negative about the effectiveness of the LEARN Line.

- Media campaigns don't seem to work
- We get no calls from the LEARN Line
- We get about two calls a year from the LEARN Line
- The LEARN Line is not working for us

- Spring 1997

There may be no obvious explanation for these directly opposing remarks. It is, however, an interesting contrast which the researcher felt important to point out.

According to the respondents in this research, the majority of calls made to councils outside the Montreal region are not via the LEARN Line number. The council directors who participated in the interviews stated that their referrals came via word-of-mouth, local advertising campaigns, school boards, etc.

One director suggested that a way to increase the number of calls would be to have the television advertisement emphasize that services are available in rural areas too. This director felt that people were perhaps hesitant in calling thinking that there were services available only in the Montreal region. While no other director mentioned this, it is a valid point and identifies a problem which could be solved with a 1-800 number for the entire province.

A few directors also said that it would be more cost-effective to spend less money on the [ABC CANADA](#) media campaigns (which they say attract very few callers anyway) and more on the centres themselves. This is not a viable alternative since the funds for the media campaigns are earmarked specifically for that purpose and cannot be donated to individual centres.

There was one element of the way the regional councils work that the Montreal area service providers would be well-advised to emulate. The regional councils report that they are in close contact with tutors and students and seemingly have a good sense of progress being made. Based solely on information obtained from the respondents of this study who called the Montreal LEARN Line, this does not seem to be the case there.

In the Montreal area there were also reports of students failing to show up, and the tutors said they did not inform the provider. These situations did not seem to occur in regional councils. For best results, it is recommended that the tutor and provider be in close enough contact that these situations do not arise. Such contact would provide a support system for both student and tutor.

Each council director was asked if there was any type of follow-up on the callers and all said that they keep in close contact with the tutors. Each council director was asked if a standardized follow-up procedure would be helpful. About half said it would be, while the other half said that it would simply be "more work for us." While most directors said that they did not keep specific records on each person who called, they did take quite extensive information about students before matching them with a tutor. Two councils in particular take extensive student information with the goal of providing them with the best possible service to meet their own individual needs.

The directors are clearly concerned about their students, and tutors seem to be doing whatever they can to ensure success. In contrast with the students and tutors interviewed in Montreal, the directors of the regional councils reported that their students tend to stay with the services for many months or even years. It would be interesting to do further research examining differences in rates of retention in Montreal and outside in order to determine why these differences exist.

Increased cooperation between the various councils responsible for the Montreal LEARN Line would prove even more mutually beneficial.

Recommendations

1 If the directors of these centres feel that ads which are more specific to them would be useful, they are encouraged to allocate their own funds for that purpose.

2 A 1-800 number would streamline the referral process and help ensure that all potential callers are targeted. In this way, rural and urban callers would not be differentiated. Another important outcome would be that areas with no access to English Yellow Pages™ would still have access to services without having to rely on word-of-mouth advertising. Although this is a very effective means of recruitment, it should not be the only means. A 1-800 number would also ensure that consistent records are kept thereby making follow-up more efficient and practical. Centralizing the referral service would be beneficial to students, tutors and the various literacy providers. In previous sections of this report, television advertising was shown to be the most effective means of recruitment. A 1-800 number would complement this method of advertising.

Conclusion

Results of this study indicate that the majority of respondents were very happy to share their experiences. They were glad that someone had called to inquire about the progress they had made and were pleased that someone was taking an interest in them. The people who were interviewed were generally very open and honest about their experiences and about any success and frustrations they had encountered.

The current operation of the Montreal LEARN Line literacy referral service is excellent. Callers are getting the information they need in a proficient and useful manner. There were only two individuals who had anything even mildly negative to say about the LEARN Line. There are only two things that would further improve an already successful service - a 1-800 number and follow-up calls made within two months after the initial call.

While this study provided answers to many questions, it also raised many potential areas of inquiry. What, for example, is stopping people from following through on the process? Why do some tutors take the training and then withdraw before they are even matched with a student? Why do some students remain with a tutor or in a class while others drop out after the first few sessions? These are all interesting questions, and the answers would help the LEARN Line referral process become even more effective.

Other issues raised by this study need to be addressed by the different literacy councils and service providers themselves. The most important issue that needs to be addressed is why so few students in the Montreal area actually receive the help they are seeking. In this study, only 42 per cent (n=31) of student callers received any form of help at all. Of those, only 7 per cent (n=5) were sufficiently satisfied with the help to stay with it. Issues surrounding tutor effectiveness, student reliability, first-language of students, support for tutors, motivation etc. are not part of the LEARN Line's mandate and need to be examined by the literacy councils and service providers. Addressing these issues in a cooperative manner could help significantly to improve the English literacy services offered in this province.

The individuals interviewed for this study all took the very important first step of calling the LEARN Line for help. Their comments underscore how difficult it is to make that first call. It is significant that so few of them get the help they seek.

Summary of Recommendations

- A follow-up call should be made by the operator of the LEARN Line no more than two months after the initial call to find out if the caller pursued services to the next level.
- Literacy classes and tutors should not be used for individuals who are not anglophone. Non-anglophone callers should be referred elsewhere.
- Advertisement campaigns should be more specifically targeted for students.
- Information about resource people and services should be provided for parents calling the LEARN Line for their children.
- Individual service providers should remain in close contact with their tutors.
- Teaching materials should be provided to tutors by service providers.
- Tutors should not be required to pay for training or materials.
- The various literacy councils should utilize a more stringent screening process when considering people as tutors.
- Media campaigns (television, print, etc.) utilized to attract tutors should be targeted to the type of tutors the organization is seeking.
- Regional councils which desire ads which are more specific to them are encouraged to allocate their own funds for their own media campaigns.
- A 1-800 number should be established to streamline the referral process.



[Appendix A](#)

[Appendix B](#)

[Appendix C](#)

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Introductory remarks

I am calling on behalf of Literacy Partners of Quebec. We are gathering information on what happens after callers call the Montreal LEARN line. I am hoping that you can take a few minutes of your time to help. The information you provide will be strictly confidential. Our goal is to make the process as effective as possible and any information you could provide would be very helpful.

Appendix B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1) Name: _____

2) Age: _____

3) First language: _____

4) Level of schooling: _____

5) Employment : _____

6) Telephone #: _____

7) City: _____

8) Date of initial call: _____

9) Referred to: _____

10) Date of follow-up call: _____

11) Status: Student: Volunteer: _____

Volunteer: _____

Tutor: _____

Other: _____

12) Were you satisfied with the information you received from the LEARN line? Why? Why not?

13) What happened after you made the initial call?

14) Did you go on to the next step? Why? Why not?

15) If yes, how long did it take for you to be matched with a tutor/student?

16) How long did you remain a student/tutor?

17) What made you stay with it?

18) What made you stop?

19) What gaps do you see in the way things currently are to the way they should be done?

20) Is there anything else you would like to comment on?

Appendix C

Intake form for initial call to Learn line

INITIAL CONTACT

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female Record # _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City/Prov: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone #: _____

Status of caller: ☐ Student ☐ Volunteer ☐ Tutor ☐ Other _____

How did you hear about LPQ? _____

Referred to _____

Mailing List ☐ Yes

FOLLOWUP

Date: _____

LPQ Caller

Are you enrolled in a class? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Getting tutoring ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did you have a problem getting services? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you need further information? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Further referral _____

Details _____

Notes _____
