

# Youth and Literacy Partnership Models



**Written by: Anne Marie Curtin**

**Produced by: Literacy Link South Central**

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From the Project Co-ordinator....

I would like to thank the [National Literacy Secretariat](#) for recognizing the importance of the issue of youth and literacy by providing funding for this project.

I would also like to thank the staff at Literacy Link South Central who provided their support and guidance throughout the project.

A special thank you is sent to all the literacy organizations that answered the survey. It provided me with insight into the Canadian-wide issue of youth and literacy.

Finally, to the Youth Service Providers I would like to say a word of thanks for the generous donation of time. I am grateful for your effort in filling out surveys and attending the community forum to explore this issue further. It is my hope that Youth Service Providers will continue to consider literacy and its importance in their work with youth.

Sincerely,  
Anne Marie Curtin  
Project Co-ordinator  
Youth and Literacy Partnership Models

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Literacy Link South Central  
213 Consortium Court, London Ontario, N6E 2S8  
Phone: 519-681-7307 Fax: 519-681-7310  
Email: [literacylink@bellnet.ca](mailto:literacylink@bellnet.ca)  
Website: [www.llsc.on.ca](http://www.llsc.on.ca)

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## Project Overview

### **Who we are - About Literacy Link South Central Literacy**

Link South Central is a regional network that provides support to literacy programs within a six county area of south central Ontario. As a regional network, Literacy Link South Central has several responsibilities, including the following:

- Providing ongoing support for literacy agencies to deliver quality programming
- Supporting lifelong learning through a variety of community planning activities
- Enhancing communication among literacy delivers and funders
- Participating in a regional plan for information and referral services
- Supporting literacy initiatives through regional co-ordination of training
- Co-ordinating and managing literacy development projects
- Educating the public about literacy
- Networking/linking with other regional, provincial and national organizations working in support of literacy

### **The goal of the project - The starting point**

Literacy Link South Central recognized a need to create clear written materials for youth (16 to 24 years of age) and youth service providers. Previously, this need had been identified, especially in the area of job search materials. Eventually, further interest in the topic of youth and literacy was identified in the youth service population. This led to an exploration of an ongoing partnership between literacy services and youth service providers.

For projects that related to youth and literacy, it was deemed important to hire a project co-ordinator that had knowledge of area youth services and of the youth themselves. It has been the experience of some professionals outside of the youth industry that there are some barriers to penetrating the youth service industry. In efforts to respect confidentiality and guard clients from being overwhelmed, youth service providers can be protective of their clients and overall operations. By having a project co-ordinator who had experience in youth services, several connections were already established. These connections made accessing information a lot easier to accomplish.

The project co-ordinator for "Youth and Literacy Partnership Models" had been involved in local youth services for approximately 15 years. Work experience included Children's Aid Society, Youth Service Canada projects, Big Brother's of London, and working with youth in local resource centres. As well, the project co-ordinator regularly attended the local "Youth Service Provider" committee that met monthly and discussed ongoing youth issues and programs. By combining experience and networking, the project co-ordinator was able to connect directly with the youth service providers and, at times, their clients. This experience was especially helpful when developing materials as the project co-ordinator could be sensitive to the needs of the youth population, especially those who were considered to be "high-risk".



**Helpful Hint: When hiring someone for a project concerning youth, consider someone with a background directly related to youth services. This provides you with an already established connection to youth services**

## **How we got here -- Past "Youth And Literacy" projects by Literacy Link South Central**

A number of agencies including the Elgin, Middlesex and Oxford Local Training Board, identified a need for job search materials for youth that were written using the principles of clear writing. As a result "Way To Go - A Job Search Survival Guide for Youth" was developed. A job search video was created to appeal to the different learning styles of youth. To help track their job search efforts, a pocket organizer was created and became a part of this package.

Throughout the development of this project (project #1), youth and their service providers were frequently consulted. It was interesting to note that Youth Service Providers, in most cases, did not identify literacy as a barrier to employment for their youth. Yet, some had to fill out questionnaires for their youth who could not read! According to the most recent statistics "45% of Ontario youth (ages 16 to 24) do not have the literacy skills necessary to function in everyday life" (OLC fact sheet series 1998). Many of the high-risk youth these Youth Service Provider work with would fit in this category. When asked, it became clear that many Youth Service Providers were unclear about the topic of literacy and how to help those they serve who might have literacy challenges. In response to this, Literacy Link South Central received funding to develop "Learning About Literacy- A Handbook for Youth Service Providers". Accompanying this was a "Toolkit" that addressed 6 topic areas: Communication, Assertiveness, Self-esteem, Skills and Traits, Time Management and Goal Setting/Problem Solving. This toolkit was designed for Youth Service Providers and for those in the literacy field who might be working with those who are in the 16 to 24 age range. There are rubrics at the end of each section to accommodate a literacy program. Rubrics are used to measure the increase in learning skills.

The materials were distributed and the topic of literacy was introduced into many youth service organizations. An increase in awareness and enthusiasm for the topic of literacy became apparent in the youth service sector. Literacy Link South Central could see a potential for an ongoing, mutually beneficial relationship between the network and Youth Service Providers. Without a follow-up to the previously distributed materials, Literacy Link South Central was concerned that a potential for a further relationship would be lost. "Youth and Literacy Partnership Models", the search for methods to develop a *sustainable and mutually-beneficial* partnership between literacy and youth services, became the next project.

## "Youth and Literacy Partnership Models" - The Project Begins

### Exploring the issue - What existed already?

Before creating a youth and literacy partnership model, research was done to explore how other literacy programs were interacting with their local youth populations. By looking into what was occurring across Canada, it was hoped that partnerships could be documented that demonstrated success in developing and sustaining an ongoing relationship. A survey (*A Survey For Literacy Service Providers*) was sent by e-mail to 85 literacy programs, networks, and public libraries across Canada. Areas canvassed included the Yukon Territory, Quebec, Alberta, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Northwest Territories, Manitoba, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island and Ontario. Both large cities and rural areas were given the opportunity to respond. See [Appendix #1](#).

Thirty responses were received. These responses from across Canada reflected generally what was happening in the area serviced by the Literacy Link South Central network. It seems that literacy service providers and youth services do not connect with each other very often. To view the "Results of the Literacy Service Provider Survey" See [Appendix #2](#).



**Helpful hint: When asking about services for the youth population, constantly define the age range. Many people stated "we do not service youth" but later revealed that they did service people who fell into the 16 to 24 yr. age range.**

Twenty-two local Youth Service Providers were asked to complete a survey designed to determine levels of existing partnerships with literacy organizations. Eleven Youth Service agencies responded. The agencies that responded were those that work predominantly with youth between the ages 16 and 24 years, in the London and Middlesex area. This survey (*A Survey For Youth Service Providers*) attempted to explore the issues of literacy when working with youth. The questions focused on Youth Service Providers' experiences with clients who might indicate, verbally or through behaviours, a low literacy level. It also gave an opportunity for Youth Service Providers to identify needs in this area. To view this survey, see [Appendix #3](#). To view "Results of Youth Service Provider Survey" see [Appendix #4](#).



**Helpful hint: With a response rate of almost 50%, this survey approach through e-mails seemed successful. It is suggested that if this were tried again in the future, a "return by" date should be mentioned as surveys were still being returned to the project co-ordinator 4 months later!**

## **Youth services and literacy services - Summary of survey results**

While the survey results of each group (literacy and youth) are contained in the "Appendix", the following is a summary of all responses. By reviewing and comparing the responses from both sectors, some interesting trends and needs were revealed:

### a) Literacy is an important issue to Youth Services

Youth Service Providers see many youth with low literacy skills. As a result of the past three years of outreach efforts by Literacy Link South Central, some youth service providers were beginning to see that literacy was an important issue for their clients. They enthusiastically suggested that their organizations needed to be more aware of literacy issues and services.

Interestingly, the Youth Service Providers only identified ways that low literacy prevented clients from completing literacy related tasks within their organizations ie. filling out forms and applications. Literacy as it relates to the whole organization was not addressed. For example, the fact that low literacy skills might prevent potential clients from accessing the services of the Youth Provider in the first place (print materials are written such that they require high levels of literacy to be interpreted) was never identified.

### b) There is usually no formal connection between literacy organizations and youth programs

Currently Youth Service Providers seem to partner informally with literacy organizations, mainly to refer to educational/literacy programs. It seems youth services and literacy services don't perceive the necessity of interacting on any other level, typically for one or more of the following reasons:

1. lack of knowledge of each other's services
2. a less than complete concept of the issue of literacy and how it affects youth
3. in order for a literacy program for youth to be successful, it must be designed in a certain way - the requirements can be restrictive to many local literacy programs.

Some literacy services have expressed frustration at the instability and lack of commitment from youth. A past study completed through the Core Literacy Network (**What Do Youth Really Want in a Literacy Program? Ladanchuck, 1996**) indicates that youth learn best when a program and resources are suited specifically to their interests. Programs that are short term, more of a drop-in style and more creative seem to be effective. If this approach is used, the youth commitment to learning might be higher.

When youth and Youth Service Providers are unaware of literacy services, they tend not to reach out to literacy programs for support. Sometimes Literacy Service Providers see this lack of outreach as evidence that needs to not exist when it comes to youth and literacy. Yet statistics, as previously stated, show that "45% of youth between the ages of 16 and 24 do not have the skills necessary to function effectively in everyday life" (OLC Fact Sheet Series 1998). The need for literacy support in this age group definitely exists! If Literacy Service Providers respond to this

age population only when approached to do so, a connection most likely will not occur as Youth Service Providers state they are not aware of programs that exist. If youth do not attend programs, then Literacy Service Providers cannot expect to receive funding to support them. One response from a literacy program stated "Clients in the youth category are proportionately smaller than the rest of our clientele..." ...therefore ... "our resources are spent on other groups of individuals". This begins to become a cycle of non-service for this age range, especially for those who are younger than 18 or 19 as they are not typically serviced by adult programs.

Some Literacy Service Providers would like to expand their mandate to include this age range but they lack the resources to do so. Yet this connection CAN be made as a few literacy programs claim to have had success. These programs are usually formed as an extension of existing community services that did not originate as literacy programs. Successes are seen when literacy programs enter into the community program (ie. youth drop-in centres and youth employment centres) and when programs are introduced to places already in use by youth instead of waiting for youth to approach a NEW service.

c) Youth Service Providers deal with youth who have low literacy skills by referring them elsewhere

Youth Service Providers attempt to help those with low literacy by referring them to other community services. While many Youth Service Providers say they make referrals, they also state that they are often unsure of the services available so it is perhaps reasonable to predict that some referrals might not be effective or accurate. Youth Service Providers have indicated a reluctance for youth to attend these programs either due to the youth being intimidated or because, as reported by youth, literacy is not important.

d) Youth Service Providers are unaware of available literacy services

During the course of this particular project it became apparent that Youth Service Providers in this area did not generally access services and resources for literacy support as they were unaware of their existence. Youth Service Providers requested easy to understand resources on literacy and outlines of literacy services that may be available.

## **From the Survey...**

Youth Service Providers were asked how their general level of awareness of literacy and youth and available local services could be improved. Responses from participants have been compiled in the following "Wish List":

### **The Wish List:**

- **Awareness Campaign" to Youth Service Providers**

The following resources were requested:

- handbooks to help Youth Service Providers work with clients who might have literacy challenges
- website information specific for youth and Youth Service Providers announcing new resources and relevant workshops
- a 1-800 # identifying resources and literacy services that help build the skills of youth
- **Awareness Training Workshops for Youth Service Providers including:**
  - how literacy affects youth in their programs
  - how to identify youth with literacy problems
  - how to approach youth about the topic of literacy
  - how to make an effective referral to a literacy program
- **Outreach worker to discuss literacy with youth and their service providers**

The outreach worker could help with literacy assessments of youth and with the referral process. While assigned to the youth serving community, the youth/literacy outreach worker could build a knowledge base of youth needs and youth services.

- **Literacy representative to be in attendance at various youth service/community committees to be aware of on-going or changing youth issues and to keep literacy as a topic at these meetings**

The literacy community could consider how to effectively use its time and resources and strategically attend meetings. This would provide youth organizations and literacy organizations with opportunities to gather information and systematically identify the literacy needs of the youth population.

- **New literacy programs**

These programs would accommodate the needs, interests and schedules of youth. They would preferably be located at youth service sites where youth feel comfortable and would be more likely to attend.

- **Discussions with youth about the importance of improving literacy skills**

These discussions could occur within the context of existing programs. For example, when a youth service provider delivers a session on health, a discussion around how important it is to be able to read food labels might be considered. A promotional campaign might also be effective to make learning more enticing for some youth (to make learning the "cool" thing) including promotional messages on objects that might be used by youth.

The immediate response by Literacy Link South Central:

### **Website Information**

One of the strongest messages from the youth service population was the need for awareness of services. In response to this, a link on the Literacy Link South Central website was designed to address the needs of Youth Service Providers directly. Basic literacy facts, program information, contact information and some fun and interactive websites were included through the link "Youth". Refrigerator / filing cabinet magnets were developed to promote the website and Literacy Link South Central's 1-800 telephone number and distributed to local Youth Service Providers.

### **Community Liaison**

In addition to producing materials that promote literacy services, Literacy Link South Central responded to the "Wish List" by attending meetings that were youth services focussed. One committee was "Youth Start" in the Middlesex County area. YouthStart is a project that is designed to bring together the social service and corporate community to respond to the needs of youth at a local level. In addition, the Youth and Literacy Partnership Models Co-ordinator continued to meet with the "London Youth Service Providers" monthly in attempts to keep literacy high on the agenda of local youth organizations.

### **Community Forum**

To explore the needs of the youth serving agencies further, a community forum was conducted. A maximum of 25 people were invited to participate to ensure that the forum would remain intimate and interactive. It was hoped that discussion would help to further identify the literacy needs of service providers as they guide and support their youth.

An introduction letter was sent to those who work with youth at local agencies. This page revealed some basic information and statistics about youth and literacy. (Youth and Literacy Partnerships Appendix #5) Attached to this was an invitation to the workshop. ("Youth Services and Literacy Community Forum" [Appendix #6](#)).

The agenda was designed around the feedback received from the "Youth Service Providers" survey. The facilitators asked participants what they hoped to learn during the morning session

so those topic areas could be targeted. A general discussion was promoted to discuss the participants' knowledge of literacy. The facilitator did not want to open with the question "what are your literacy needs when working with youth?" It was important to explore how much those who attended knew about literacy. How would they know what supports they needed if they were unsure what "literacy" was in the first place? With the combined efforts of workshop participants, a comprehensive definition of literacy was developed. This led to discussion about Youth Service Provider's work-related experiences and when they needed literacy supports. In a group activity, participants were asked to discuss how they handled situations that involved youth and their literacy challenges. This helped to identify to Literacy Link South Central how community youth organizations generally respond to a need and what gaps in services existed. Literacy Link South Central spoke about services and programs available to the participants to guide them as they help youth who have literacy challenges. In general, there was a discussion about the variety of ways to help youth that might have low literacy levels. This could include developing an on-site literacy program for youth to access. Another option would be to refer the youth to an existing literacy service that is appropriate for their needs. Literacy Link South Central offers a variety of services that provide those who work with youth with the necessary tools to help youth with low literacy. These services included:

- providing clear writing assistance- to simplify written materials
- conducting literacy awareness audits- to explore how accessible an organization is to clients with low literacy
- training staff in the area of literacy awareness- to help staff identify the potentially hidden issue of literacy and how best to approach the topic
- making referrals- to gain information on how and where to refer individuals with literacy needs
- tracking resources- to help Youth Service Providers be aware of recent resources, materials and workshops

During the "wrap-up" the participants enthusiastically committed to attending a future forum that included clear writing training. By providing this forum and future gatherings, it is hoped that there will be increased literacy awareness by these Youth Service Providers. It is also hoped that the issue of youth and literacy will be explored further within youth agencies.

(Youth and Literacy Forum Agenda- [Appendix # 7](#))

( Ice Breaker- [Appendix #8](#))

(Worksheet #1-[Appendix # 9](#))

(Report on Youth and Literacy Forum- [Appendix #10](#))

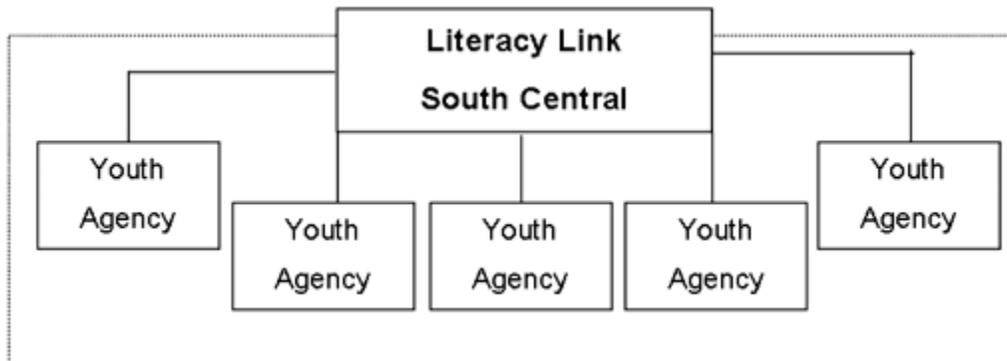
## **Future Considerations**

The ultimate goal of the "Youth and Literacy Partnership Models" project was to explore the potential for an on-going and sustainable partnership between youth services and Literacy Link South Central. There are several potential designs and variables involved.

The following section will review what links could be initiated and maintained by a literacy network or program as well as the links that Literacy Link South Central determined would meet the needs of its own community in south central Ontario.

## Potential Partnership Models

### A Formal Partnership



--- dotted line indicates that Literacy Link South Central works with the youth community as a whole

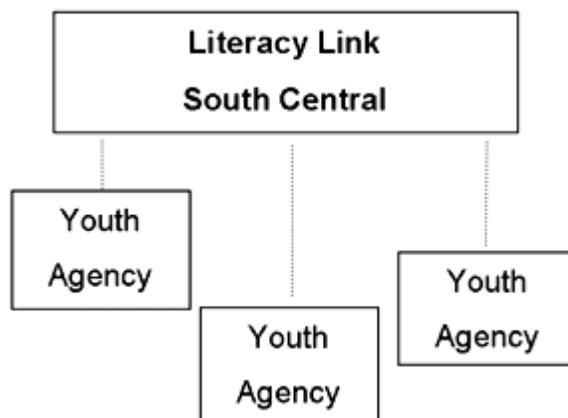
In a formal relationship, youth service agencies would pay a fee to belong to the Literacy Link South Central membership. This fee would enable youth service agencies to access a variety of services as a distinct set of stakeholders within the membership.

**Pros:** Through a formal partnership, Literacy Link South Central would relate to youth service providers as an entire "community". Youth service agencies would also have the ability to attend meetings that set the direction of Literacy Link South Central. This includes attendance at Annual General Meetings. As a member of Literacy Link South Central, the agency would also receive regular notices and distribution of relevant resources including the Literacy Link South Central newsletter. Literacy Link South Central would benefit from the increased membership input and increased exposure in the community.

**Cons:** If the only partnership established is a formal partnership, both parties might miss out on the exchange of information that occurs through casual conversation and interactive forums. Service providers need a platform to explore and discuss the issues of their clients. They may not be given this opportunity for attention if partnered only on a formal level. This model might not be very flexible given the variety of youth serving agencies that exist. This type of partnership also assumes that both parties have an equal stake in the topic of literacy. With Youth Service Providers this might not be the case unless their organization is a literacy provider too.

**Summary:** Although belonging formally to Literacy Link South Central would have the benefit of consistent interaction between Literacy Link South Central and youth services, an informal partnership should also be explored as a complement or an alternative to a formal partnership.

## An Informal Partnership



--- the various lengths of the dotted line indicate the variety of relationships that could exist. They (Youth Providers) don't all have to be at the same place at the same time with respect to the integration of literacy.

In an informal partnership, individual youth service agencies would interact with Literacy Link South Central on an "as needed" basis. Interaction would occur in response to needs identified by both parties, recognizing that literacy is only part of the Youth Service Provider's mandate. For instance, if a youth serving agency needed clear writing or sensitivity training, these services would be negotiated and potentially provided by Literacy Link South Central. Individual agencies would decide whether or not literacy was a priority and would connect with Literacy Link South Central according to their needs. For example, if they needed help in making an effective literacy referral for a client they could call for feedback on what programs existed for that client. Yet, all Youth Service Providers do not have the time to receive training in literacy or to make themselves aware of literacy resources that are available to them. A more efficient approach would be to assign a representative from the organization to interact with Literacy Link South Central. This could be any individual who would be the "literacy resource person". Through regular e-mail notices, faxes and workshops, that person would be aware of supports offered to youth and youth service providers. They could then take this information back to their co-workers. This literacy resource person could also continue to identify needs within their organization.

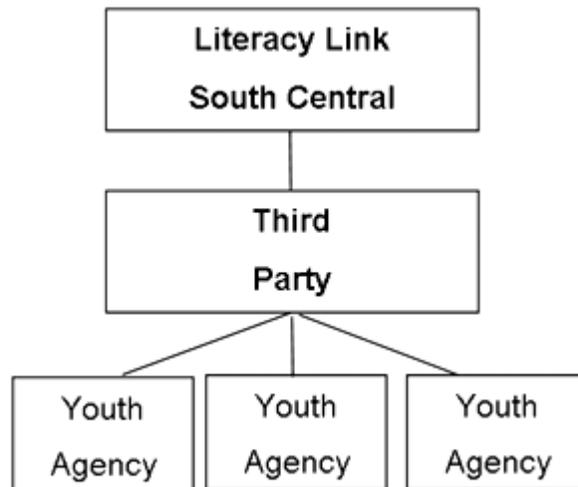
**Pros:** An informal relationship would help the literacy network meet the more immediate needs of the youth service agency, on an agency to agency basis. This relationship could also include Literacy Link South Central conducting an Awareness Audit for the organization. The on-site literacy representative could help to implement the suggestions resulting from the audit. An on-site literacy representative could keep youth service providers updated on literacy-related resources and workshops. This would definitely be an effective partnership with a positive impact.

**Cons:** As Literacy Link South Central is a network serving six counties, establishing 1:1 relationships with youth service agencies could quickly drain the existing resources at Literacy

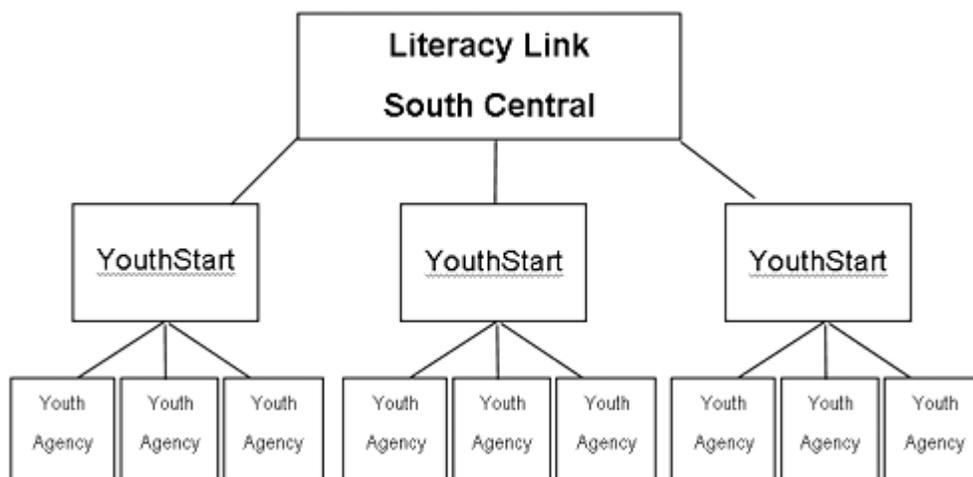
Link South Central. This network currently has 1.5 staff and needs to weigh the benefits of each of its interactions.

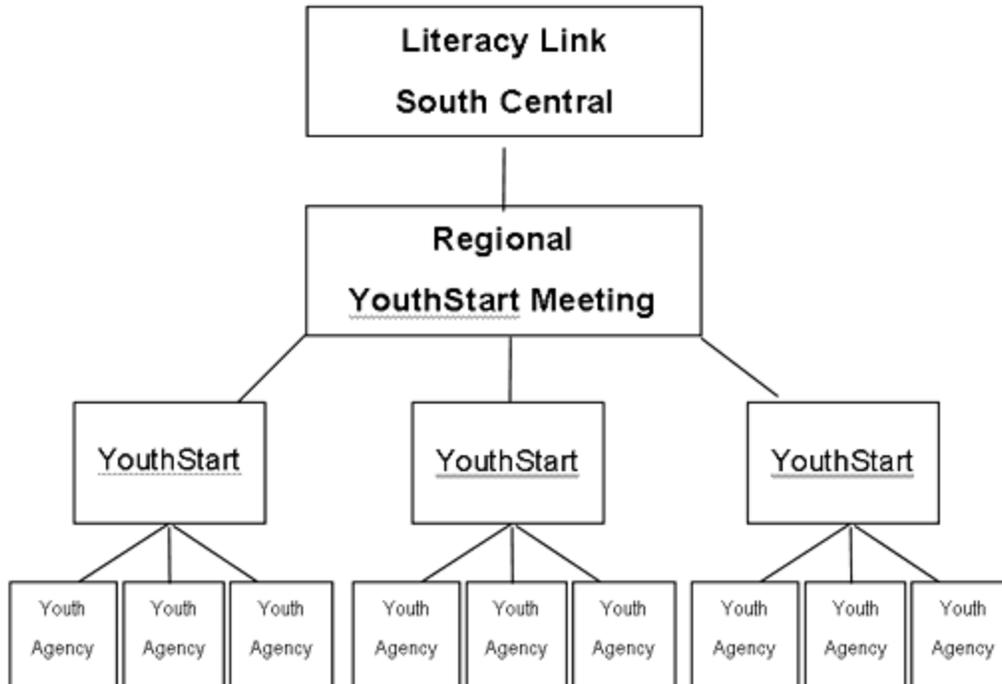
**Summary:** When this partnership occurs, both sides benefit. The youth service organization will be better able to serve their clients. Literacy Link South Central will be fulfilling its mandate to respond to the literacy needs of the community. Yet, having few resources limits Literacy Link South Central from reaching the majority of the youth service agencies. It would be beneficial to explore a connection with an existing structure or network that involve youth services in the six county area.

### Connecting Through a Third Party



### Linking Through "YouthStart" Committees





In the surrounding counties served by Literacy Link South Central, several YouthStart initiatives have developed. Does it make sense for Literacy Link South Central to belong to YouthStart? Keeping in mind that Literacy Link South Central has limited human and financial resources, does sitting as a regular member of these committees make good use of these resources? Could involvement in YouthStart be the means by which Literacy Link South Central reaches the youth service population and offers education and support to youth service providers?

Although there is direct connection to youth services, YouthStart often focuses on specific projects and the members are primarily occupied with this agenda. There may not be the opportunity to provide effective literacy training or to educate the "front line" staff that there is when approaching individual agencies. Yet, this committee does provide an opportunity for Literacy Link South Central to increase literacy awareness and some of this connection has already occurred. Currently YouthStart projects have started in several surrounding counties. If they gather to form a network of YouthStart committees, could this be a place for Literacy Link South Central to fit in as part of a partnership? As Literacy Link South Central provides services to many counties, partnering with a network of YouthStarts might be good strategy. It could be that this network becomes too complex and there might be little opportunity for Literacy Link South Central to have an effect. Yet, it could be these occasional gatherings of youth service representatives would be an opportunity for Literacy Link South Central to strategically interact with numerous youth organizations.

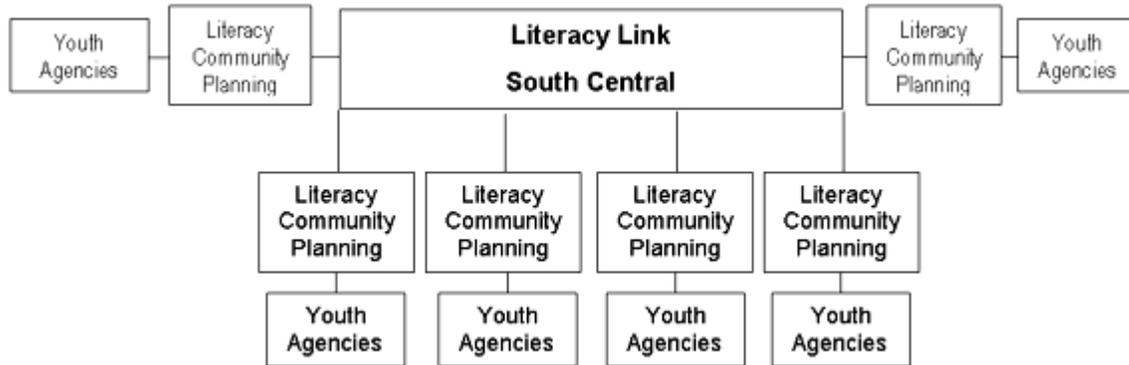
During the Spring of 2002, the "Youth and Literacy Partnership Models" Project Co-ordinator approached the London/Middlesex YouthStart Co-ordinator and spoke about the literacy needs of youth, past Literacy Link South Central projects in this area and this current project that explores partnerships between youth and literacy. The "Youth and Literacy Partnership Models" Project Co-ordinator eventually joined a YouthStart sub-committee which focussed on academic

skills, upgrading and literacy. Through discussion and needs identification, the YouthStart sub-committee agreed that literacy would be a priority for this subcommittee and they are designing a one-to-one tutoring program for youth. The decision to focus on literacy could be a direct result of Literacy Link South Central's involvement on this committee. YouthStart also invited the "Youth and Literacy Partnership Models" Co-ordinator to speak at its General Membership meeting. This would be an opportunity to introduce the topic of the literacy needs of youth and Literacy Link South Central services to approximately 75 agencies. During a future General Meeting of this YouthStart project, the Executive Director of Literacy Link South Central was able to present to the members an outline of literacy and how Literacy Link South Central services could be incorporated into individual agencies. It was decided that the Executive Director of Literacy Link South Central would do this presentation as she was able to discuss what her organization could offer in terms of human or financial resources should a partnership develop with any of the organizations. This initial presentation probably made a small impact. Yet, it is anticipated that each time Literacy Link South Central has an opportunity to share this information, the partnership between youth services and literacy will grow.

In one county, the YouthStart Co-ordinator expressed great appreciation for the literacy needs of the youth in their geographical area. Furthermore, the YouthStart Co-ordinator enthusiastically inquired about services she could access immediately. However, she did not see a need for a literacy representative on their YouthStart committee as an official committee did not exist, only a variety of sub-committees that were directly project related.

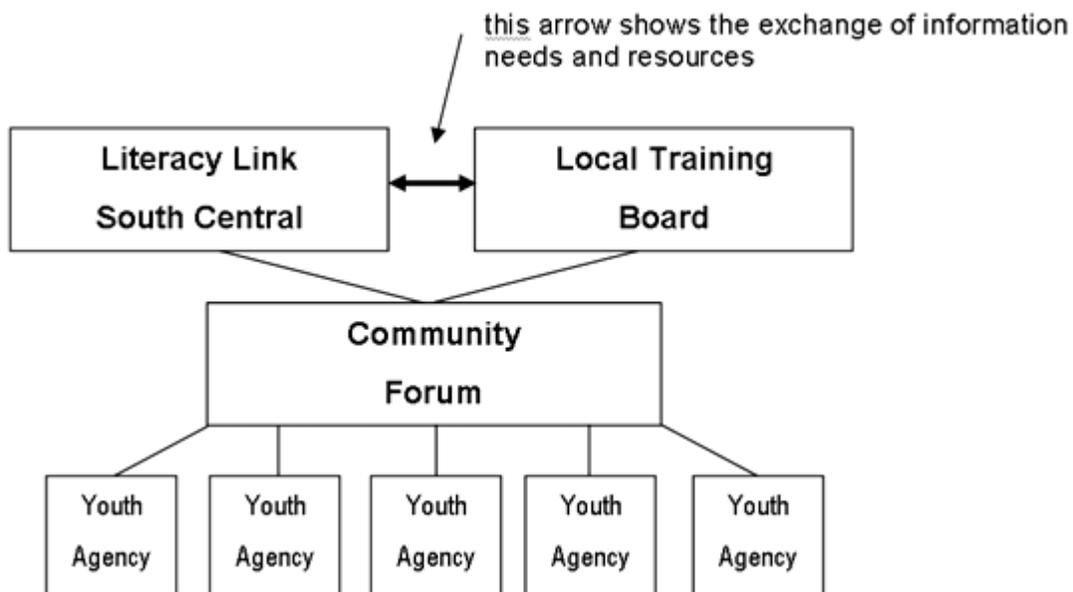
Eventually YouthStart committees might exist in each of the six counties that Literacy Link South Central services. If these committees were to meet regularly and Literacy Link South Central became involved in these committees, it would be a good opportunity to increase literacy awareness. Constant consideration should be given to the question "Is this a valuable use of Literacy Link South Central's resources/time?" It would be hoped that literacy remains a priority for YouthStart committees given the high literacy needs of the youth population. The involvement of Literacy Link South Central on these committees would help to keep the topic of literacy high on the agenda. It is an opportunity to reach a wider audience and hope that, over time, the message about the importance of literacy and youth will become a priority for the individual organizations. YouthStart could also provide Literacy Link South Central with the ability to make connections with the youth service community and then pursue individual partnerships with those agencies. Literacy Link South Central will be able to offer resources and suggestions when the topic of literacy arises either for individual organizations or for the YouthStart committee as a whole.

## Linking through "Literacy Community Planning" Groups (LCP)



As an alternative to approaching youth service groups to incorporate literacy into their programs, one could consider approaching an organized literacy group and asking them to incorporate youth services into their programs. "Literacy Community Planning" groups exist in each of the targeted counties and meet approximately once each month to discuss local needs in literacy. They already service people who are 19 years of age to 24 years of age (and over). By the definition of this project, these are youth. These planning groups could be asked to broaden their age range to also include youth and youth services including those as young as 16. If human and financial resources were available, perhaps an on-site literacy program at a local youth service organization would be successful.

## Linking through Local Training Boards



In the area served by Literacy Link South Central, there are two local training boards. They are required to explore the needs of the community. For example, "The Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford Local Training Board commits to the successful use of resources by identifying priorities and fostering accessible, flexible and responsive training which enables individuals and organizations to be part of a thriving and viable community". (mission from website [www.localboard.on.ca](http://www.localboard.on.ca)) "The Grand Erie Training & Adjustment Board is committed to building bridges with our community partners by facilitating relevant, life-long opportunities to participate in an ever-changing labour market." ("statement of purpose" from website [www.getab.on.ca](http://www.getab.on.ca))

Local training boards help to provide support and resources in response to identified needs. In fact, they may be willing to fund community forums. Youth and employment are two topic areas in which training boards have shown a great deal of interest. If a case could be made stating the importance of a youth and literacy network, especially with recognition given to the connection between employability and literacy skills, the local boards might be able to support the co-ordination of a youth and literacy network.

## Literacy Awareness Designation

Literacy is an issue that affects everyone. Many organizations may not be aware of just how many of their clients might struggle with low literacy. Literacy Link South Central recognizes that a lack of literacy affects every aspect of a person's life. Recognizing the need for agencies to be aware of the literacy needs of clients, Literacy Link South Central is exploring the concept of a "Literacy Designation" for individual agencies. This would include a package of services that would not only help a youth with literacy challenges feel more comfortable within the youth service agency, it could also attract more clients. By making small adjustments to written material and the physical environment, an organization can make its programs and services more accessible to the public, especially those with low literacy. Literacy designation could become part of a standards guide for youth programs such as the local "Start Guide" (in the London Ont. area). With 45% of the youth population exhibiting literacy challenges (this number would be higher for high-risk youth), literacy should be an important issue for any youth program in the process of being established. A place that has been designated as literacy aware would definitely be more approachable for someone who has literacy challenges! Agencies would be more successful in attracting and *keeping* clients

As part of being designated "literacy aware" the agency would receive an "Awareness Audit". This is a general overview of the organization's practices and layout to identify possible barriers someone with low literacy skills might encounter. This also includes a closer look at promotional and written materials to ensure they are "clearly written". The layout and language of the material is considered to ensure they are easy to understand. Accompanying these assessments would be some basic staff awareness training. This would include answers to questions such as "How do I know if someone has a literacy problem?" "How do I talk to a client about it?" Further training workshops and material review could be provided on an as needed basis.

Providing Awareness Audits is a valuable use of Literacy Link South Central's time and resources. By providing the opportunity for service providers to create an on-going atmosphere of literacy awareness and sensitivity, the time spent by Literacy Link South Central would have a long-term impact. Staff members will not need to spend much of their valuable time to learn more about literacy. With a small amount of effort, staff can learn a few tips and approaches that would help with their daily interactions with clients. This would be a good investment of time and resources and beneficial for all involved.

## Lessons Learned

When reflecting on the attempts made by Literacy Link South Central to approach and form partnerships with the youth service industry one can see there are some lessons to be learned. As the "Youth and Literacy Partnership Models" project progressed, it became more apparent that Literacy Link South Central may have missed a few steps in developing ongoing relationships with youth service agencies.

As stated in the section "How We Got Here" the first project was to develop resources that were clear written for youth who were in the process of job hunting. Although this exposed Youth Service Providers to the fact that Literacy Link South Central existed, it did not begin to explain literacy and how it affects youth. Maybe there was an underestimation by Literacy Link South Central as to what degree the issue of literacy was hidden in the youth service industry. Eventually this gap in knowledge was identified and during the second and third projects, literacy awareness training was offered to the youth service population.



**Helpful Hint: Explore people's knowledge on the topic of literacy before asking "what do you need from a literacy program?"**

More efforts could have been made, initially to explore what Youth Service Providers knew about literacy. Without knowing what you need, how do you ask for it? Only after the definition of literacy and its effects are explained could Literacy Link South Central ask "what literacy supports do you need?" This became more apparent as the "Youth and Literacy Partnership Models" project continued. Youth Service Providers often did not show interest in the topic of literacy. How does one interpret this? Does this lack of enthusiasm reflect:

- a) lack of interest,
- b) a lack of need or
- c) a general lack of knowledge?

Due to supporting statistics and with further exploration we were able to discount the "lack of need" notion. Youth Service Providers continually gave examples of how their clients show low literacy skills. We addressed the issue of "lack of knowledge" with the "Learning About

Literacy" manual (project #2). We also gave the Youth Service Providers the opportunity to attend the 1/2 day community forum, where they could learn about literacy and explore how it affects clients and programs overall (during this project, #3). Now we are left with considering "lack of interest". As time progresses we will see if the issue of literacy is important to Youth Service Providers. Attempts to establish sustainable and fulfilling partnerships continue. Literacy Link South Central needs to make their services easily accessible and directly applicable to youth services to keep this population engaged. It will require a continued reminder by Literacy Link South Central that literacy is a hidden issue and remains important whether youth clients articulate a need or not. It will also require that the Youth Service Providers continue to seek support from the literacy field when opportunities are presented. This means attending workshops to learn more and to keep communication on the literacy needs of their clients a priority.

## In Conclusion

Since it does not offer literacy programming directly, there is no opportunity for Literacy Link South Central to measure its impact numerically. As a network, Literacy Link South Central is successful when it is perceived to be useful, having an impact in the literacy field. Literacy Link South Central's mandate is to gather information on literacy needs, decipher its meaning and then react to identified needs. The attempts to connect with youth services have been a priority for several years now. Recent statistics show, and the youth service industry generally agrees, that there is a need for more literacy services for the youth population. Yet, literacy is often referred to as the "hidden" issue. People who struggle with poor literacy skills often find coping mechanisms and their challenges are often not clearly or willingly revealed. If literacy issues are hidden, they are often forgotten, and then not seen as an important issue for the youth service population. It is an underlying issue, not as immediate as having food and clothing, but arguably just as impactful. Constant reminders are required to keep the issue of literacy important to Youth Service Provider's. When given the opportunity to explore the issue of literacy further, youth service providers can see the importance of literacy and how it affects their clients.

Literacy Link South Central is enthusiastic about this increase in literacy sensitivity and awareness that has resulted from recent outreach attempts and would like to continue and strengthen this relationship. There are a variety of potential partnership models that would be useful to help to connect literacy and youth services. Ultimately the partnership depends on the available resources (human and financial) and on the perceived need for what each other has to offer. As needs and resources are constantly changing, it is inevitable that the structure of the partnership will change as well.

Currently Literacy Link South Central has engaged in partnerships that vary in format. Through recent Awareness Audits and staff training workshops, Literacy Link South Central has formed one to one partnerships with a small group of local youth service agencies. The more formal partnership of a community forum with youth service providers was successful and kept the communication between literacy services and youth needs on-going. Literacy Link South Central intends to continue providing these youth service community forums in the future, perhaps on a semi-annual basis. Also, Literacy Link South Central representatives regularly attend YouthStart committee meetings to continue this partnership. With limited financial and human resources,

utilizing third parties makes a lot of sense for Literacy Link South Central. This approach also recognizes the fact that literacy is only one of the issues that youth service providers are facing on a daily basis.

Literacy Link South Central has also considered working with other partners who may find value in linking through a third party arrangement such as the Local Boards. The Local Boards have been instrumental in assisting the literacy network with hosting community forums. Since the aim is to solicit information and both the Local Boards and the network have an interest in the same information, it makes sense to partner. This way, youth service providers will be approached in a more systematic and coordinated way to offer feedback about community needs.

Finally, Literacy Link South Central will also continue to address youth and literacy through Literacy Community Planning meetings. This way, the topic of youth and literacy will be a shared responsibility within the community. Literacy Link South Central becomes the mechanism that connects front line youth agencies with front line literacy agencies.

Literacy Link South Central will continue to explore the needs of the youth population and to share literacy information with Youth Service Providers. This will be done in a variety of partnership styles according to the needs and interest of the community and the resources of Literacy Link South Central. The more agencies develop awareness toward the topic of literacy, the more they will be able to support the people who use their services. Increased awareness of literacy issues in community services will mean that Literacy Link South Central has been successful as well.

## **Appendix #1**

A Survey for Literacy Service Providers

## **Appendix #2**

Survey Results Of Literacy Service Providers

## **Appendix #3**

Youth Service Provider's Survey

## **Appendix #4**

Detailed Results of Youth Service Provider's Survey

## **Appendix #5**

Youth and Literacy Partnerships

## **Appendix #6**

Youth Services and Literacy Community Forum

## **Appendix #7**

Youth Literacy Forum

## **Appendix #8**

What Does It Mean To Be Literate?

## **Appendix #9**

Youth Literacy Forum - Worksheet #1

Youth Literacy Forum - Worksheet #2

## **Appendix #10**

Report: Youth and Literacy Forum May 13, 2002

## Appendix #1

The following survey was sent out to Literacy programs and networks across the country. The responses are compiled in the subsequent document titled "Results".

### Questionnaire

#### **A Survey for Literacy Service Providers**

*Youth and Literacy Partnership Models* c/o Literacy Link South Central  
213 Consortium Court, London Ontario, N6E 2S8  
phone: 519-642-2163 fax: 519-672-9089  
email: [amcurtin@sprint.ca](mailto:amcurtin@sprint.ca) website: [www.llsc.on.ca](http://www.llsc.on.ca)

#### **Survey completed by**

**Name -**

**Organization Name -**

**Organization Location -**

**Telephone number –**

1. Does your organization have a connection with youth service organizations?  
If no, why not?
2. a) What interaction is occurring between your organization and youth service organizations serving youth *16 to 19 yrs. of age*?  
b) What interaction is occurring between your organization and youth service organizations serving youth *20 to 24 yrs. of age*?
3. Does your organization make a distinction between these learning groups?
4. How was this interaction initially established?
5. a) What programs/support do you provide for youth (16 to 19yrs. of age) and youth service agencies?  
b) What programs/support do you provide for youth (20 to 24yrs. of age) and youth service agencies?
6. How did you decide what programs and supports were required by youth service organizations?
7. What successes have you had working with youth service organizations?
8. What challenges have you encountered when working with youth service organizations?
9. Was your organization able to overcome these challenges?

10. If "yes" to question #7 how were these challenges overcome?  
If "no" to question #7 why not?
11. Is there a formal structure in place that provides a sustainable and on-going connection between your organization/services and youth services in your area?  
  
b) If "yes" what does it look like?
12. Could you direct me to another organization that has successfully made and maintained a connection between literacy and youth services?

**Recommended Organization**

**Organization Name and Location:**

**Contact Name:**

**Contact Position:**

**e-mail address:**

**Telephone #:**

*Thank you for your time and effort.  
Would you be interested in hearing the results of this project?*

## Appendix #2

### Survey Results Of Literacy Service Providers

#### A Survey for Literacy Service Providers

Youth and Literacy Partnership Models c/o Literacy Link South Central

213 Consortium Court, London Ontario, N6E 2S8

phone: 519-642-2163 fax: 519-672-9089

email: [amcurtin@sprint.ca](mailto:amcurtin@sprint.ca) website: [www.llsc.on.ca](http://www.llsc.on.ca)

#### Survey completed by:

Beat The Street (T.O.); The Calgary Learning Centre; Cumberland Adult Network For Upgrading (NS); Quill Learning Network (Walkerton ON); Ningwakwe Learning Press (Owen Sound ON); Literacy Council of Brantford Ontario (ON); Edmonton Public Library (AB); READ Saskatoon (SK); Simcoe Muskoka Literacy Network (ON); Chateauguay Valley Literacy Council (QC); London Public Library (ON); Cape Breton Literacy Network (NS); Guysborough Adult Learning Association (NS); Literacy Unlimited (QC); Annapolis County Learning Network (NS); Youth Tutors Elgin (ON); Wheable Centre for Adult Education (ON); Quebec Literacy Council (QC); Literacy Network of Durham Region (ON); Yukon Learn (Whitehorse YT); Words Work Learning Centre (AB); Bedford Sackville Literacy Network (NS); Hamilton Wentworth ABE (ON); Centre for Family Literacy (AB); Literacy Co-ordinators of Alberta (AB); Community Literacy of Ontario (ON); Centre for Family Literacy Edmonton (AB); Ambercroft; Community Literacy of Ontario;

#### **1. Does your organization have a connection with youth service organizations? If no, why not?**

For the majority, answers indicated "no". Many provided services only for those over 18 and 19 years of age and overlooked that this, is also "youth". There was a sense that working with any youth under the age of 18 would be in direct competition with the school system. Some replied that they did not have requests from agencies to service this population. The issue of lack of human resources was a barrier to establishing new partnerships and services to this younger population.

#### **2. a) What interaction is occurring between your organization and youth service organizations serving youth 16 to 19 yrs. of age?**

Most interaction in this age group came from having connections through employment centres and libraries. There seems to be a caution around supplying services to this population as it is a perceived conflict of interest with school boards. This reflects an assumption the school boards are solely responsible for educating this age group and successful at doing so.

**b) What interaction is occurring between your organization and youth service organizations serving youth 20 to 24 yrs. of age?**

Age group made a small difference. There was a greater list of services for this age group as it was recognized as the 18 yrs. + group. Still, many stated "we do no service this age group as we do not service youth."

3. 3. Does your organization make a distinction between these learning groups?

The answers to this question re-enforced what was stated previously. Most programs provide for those who are over 18 or 19 years of age. Again, the comment that "the school board serves those who are younger" resurfaced.

4. How was this interaction initially established?

Interaction that has been established usually comes from having the literacy programs combine their programs in conjunction with employment programs or probation and parole programs. Many established a connection with local youth services only after they were approached for services by those agencies.

5. a) What programs/support do you provide for youth (16 to 19 yrs. of age) and youth service agencies?

Many replied "none". A few said that they made referrals to Literacy and Basic Skills programs.

- b) What programs/support do you provide for youth (20 to 24 yrs. of age) and youth service agencies?

Most programs referred to were Adult Basic Education courses.

6. How did you decide what programs and supports were required by youth service organizations?

Any youth programs developed were the result of that youth agency requesting the service. Some Literacy Service Providers had the opportunity to sit on community committees, have interactions with the courts/parole system and programs developed as a result of this networking. For the most part, the literacy services felt their programs were "set" as they were mandated by the government. As well, many of those who answered this survey did not feel a need to service this age group as they have not been approached by the organizations servicing them.

7. What successes have you had working with youth service organizations?

Partnerships with probation and parole programs were often referred to. A few successes were referred to as there were some organizations who maintained on-going interaction with community organizations. References were made to those who were younger than 19 as being "immature" and therefore difficult to establish successes with.

8. What challenges have you encountered when working with youth service organizations?

This seemed an easy question to answer for those who completed the survey. In general, the literacy service providers seem cautious to provide services to youth. Youth were described as "unmotivated", "resistant to authority" and "a difficult to reach audience". Other challenges mentioned were lack of finances and human resources to extend beyond existing programs and to reach out to this age group.

9. Was your organization able to overcome these challenges?

10. If "yes" to question #9 how were these challenges overcome?

If "no" to question #9 why not?

Most did not overcome these challenges. Lack of learner commitment and lack of agency

time remained a barrier for many places. Some were able to overcome challenges by taking the program to an organization in the community that is commonly used by youth.

11. Is there a formal structure in place that provides a sustainable and on-going connection between your organization/services and youth services in your area?

Many replied no.

b) If "yes" what does it look like?

Some have been able to connect with community organizations and offer programs through them. One survey reply summed it up as "we provide the program, the agency provides the space". Those in smaller communities have success with networking and partnerships due to having a "good rapport with one and other". There were attempts by one literacy organization to establish a network of youth services for their area and have literacy take a role. This was not followed through on due to lack of funding and human resources.

### **Other General Comments**

Some literacy service providers did not respond directly to the survey. Instead they offered general thoughts on the areas covered by the survey. The same successes, issues and concerns were reflected in these responses.

### **Issues were:**

- conflict of interest with the school
- programs mandated and therefore limited by provincial funding
- no formal relationship exists but given the resources, they would like to explore this area of literacy and youth services further

Successes were a result of taking programs to community programs such as camp programs and youth drop-in centres.

## Appendix #3

### Youth Service Provider's Survey

#### Survey completed by

**Name -**

**Organization Name -**

**Organization Location -**

**Telephone number -**

**What services for youth do you provide? –**

1. Is literacy an important issue for your organization and those you serve?
  - b) Why or why not?
2. What are some of the experiences that you've had with youth (16 to 19 years of age) and their literacy needs?
  - b) What are some of the experiences that you've had with youth (20 to 24 years of age) and their literacy needs?
  - c) Do you see a different literacy need between these age groups?  
If yes, what is it?
3. How have you responded to these needs?
  - b) Were these methods helpful (why or why not?)
4. Do you have any interaction with local literacy programs or networks?
  - b) If yes what connection has been made?
  - c) If no, why not?
5. Below is a list of some of the literacy services available for your organization and your clients :
  - a. literacy tutoring assistance
  - b. a literacy assessment to see what literacy needs the youth have
  - c. clear writing assistance to help you create literacy sensitive materials
  - d. literacy websites
  - e. written materials and hand books that are designed to help people with literacy challenges
  - f. interactive software
  - g. sensitivity training for staff
  - h. written materials to increase staff knowledge in the area of literacy awareness

- i. community (ie. libraries, resource centres etc.), school board programs and college upgrading programs

Do you and your co-workers access these supports?

If so, which ones?

6. If you do not access the above listed literacy supports, why not?
7. Do you think it is important for your organization to become more aware of literacy issues and services?
8. How can your local literacy network establish a better connection with your organization and other youth service agencies?
9. What literacy services do you feel are lacking currently for the youth population that you work with? (Please include general age range).
10. Would you be interested in hearing the results of this project?
11. Are there other youth serving organizations you feel would be able to answer these questions and contribute knowledge and experiences to this survey?

If yes, please fill out the following:

**Recommended organization name:**

**Organization location:**

**Contact name:**

**Phone number:**

**E-mail address:**

*Thank you for your time.*

## Appendix #4

### Detailed Results of Youth Service Provider's Survey

#### A Survey For Youth Service Provider's

##### Survey completed by:

YWCA St. Thomas	St. Leonard's Society	London City Recreation
Madam Vanier Children's Services	HALO Community Centre	Attendance Counsellor TVDSB
Youth Opportunities Unlimited X 2	Teen Zone Boy's and Girl's Club	Peer Power Centre
Youth Action Centre	Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre	

##### **What services for youth do you provide?**

- Youth Service Canada Program - "Youth Tutors Elgin"
- recreation, leadership training and employment
- social/ support groups " attendance and group counselling
- referral to community agencies including educational institutions and in particular alternative educational options \* \* co-op placement and services for high risk youth
- recreation, leadership activities, employment and training opportunities, homework/resource time, supportive atmosphere for those in need
- drop-in centre
- Youth Council, young parents dinner club
- probation services " emotional, behavioural and social intervention in a variety of milieus and modalities
- drop-in, phone and e-mail support
- employment and career counseling

##### **1. Is literacy an important issue for your organization and those you serve?**

All responses were an enthusiastic "Yes!"

##### **b) Why or why not?**

Answers to this question showed that Youth Service Providers were very aware of the impact of low literacy on their clients. They stated that youth often display low literacy skills. They recognize that this effects their employment opportunities, self concept and often resulted in poor behaviour and even criminal activity. Also, it might affect their ability to be successful in a treatment process.

##### **2. What are some of the experiences that you've had with youth (16 to 19 years of age) and their literacy needs?**

Answers included:

- poor skills in reading and writing.
- inability to complete employment applications.
- difficulty comprehending written procedures and manuals etc.
- inaccurate information on corporate forms and other legal documents;
- inability to develop posters, newsletters and other program related materials.
- inability to achieve in a regular school setting results in low self esteem and behaviour
- English is affected; grammar, spelling and penmanship is poor
- some youth felt the atmosphere in the schools were undesirable, unsafe or unhappy- they don't have faith in the education system because they were let down
- not clear what they are at this point as youth are accessing resources unrelated to literacy ie. food and shelter

b) What are some of the experiences that you've had with youth (20 to 24 years of age) and their literacy needs?

Many answered "the same as above". One response stated the following, "I believe the group that is in this age range are often the same people who drift through the years prior to 20-24 with little resolve to their needs in this area." Another response stated that with increase maturity there is an increased willingness to learn.

c) Do you see a different literacy need between these age groups?

In general the responses stated "no". Their needs are the same. Yet, some pointed out programming might need to be adjusted due to different maturity levels.

3. How have you responded to these needs?

Many youth agencies have developed their own programs to assist youth with low literacy skills. Others state they refer their youth to outside literacy programs but do not feel properly equipped to do so as they are unaware of what programming exists for their clients.

b) Were these methods helpful (why or why not?)

Youth Service Providers who implemented their own programs and supports said that they felt they were successful but due to strain on resources, these supports were not sustainable. Those who were referring youth to outside programs felt that youth did not follow through on attending.

4. Do you have any interaction with local literacy programs or networks?

a) If yes what connection has been made?

Few interactions have occurred between local literacy programs or networks and

youth services. Some respondents referred to past materials and current outreach by Literacy Link South Central. Also mentioned was a local youth employment agency that has a GED lab.

c) If no, why not?

Responses indicated a lack of awareness of literacy services. Some also stated that they are busy with meeting the basic needs of their clients. Surprisingly, a few responded that the issue of literacy is a school board issue.

5. Below is a list of some of the literacy services available for your organization and your clients:

- a. literacy tutoring assistance
- b. a literacy assessment to see what literacy needs the youth have
- c. clear writing assistance to help you create literacy sensitive materials
- d. literacy websites
- e. written materials and hand books that are designed to help people with literacy challenges
- f. interactive software
- g. sensitivity training for staff
- h. written materials to increase staff knowledge in the area of literacy awareness
- i. community (ie. libraries, resource centres etc.) , school board programs and college upgrading programs

Do you and your co-workers access these supports? If so, which ones?

The services used the most were written materials and library and resource centre services.

6. If you do not access the above listed literacy supports, why not?

Through survey responses, youth service providers all indicated that they were unaware these services existed.

7. Do you think it is important for your organization to become more aware of literacy issues and services?

Again, the response was an enthusiastic "Yes"

8. How can your local literacy network establish a better connection with your organization and other youth service agencies?

The following suggestions were provided.

- knowledge and understanding of each other's work
- awareness and higher profile services
- inform youth serving agencies of services provided by local literacy networks
- attending committees and having people return information to staff when they return
- a single page fax sheet from time to time of services available, outlining when,

where, cost etc.

- I would love a listing of current services/programs and who they are offered by, as well as how to refer clients to these programs (so they are not overwhelmed)
- more information to be sent that is concise and to the point- workshops and info sessions would be good too
- have a literacy guest speaker at staff meetings
- contact Youth Outreach Worker and share info re: resources and programs

(These were compiled to form the outline of "The Wish List" contained within the main report of "Youth and Literacy Partnership Models")

**9. What literacy services do you feel are lacking currently for the youth population that you work with?**

Generally, the responses indicated a need for more 1:1 learning services and supports for youth. An increase awareness of literacy skill-building options for Youth Service Providers to refer the youth they work with.

## Appendix #5

### Youth and Literacy Partnerships

#### Dear Youth Service Provider:

You have been sent this message as an invitation to a special community forum. This will be a gathering of people who work with youth 16 to 24 years of age. It will be an opportunity for you to explore and discuss the literacy challenges of youth.

#### Literacy Is Important To The Youth You Work With!

- Recent studies indicate that 45% of Ontario youth (ages 16 and 24) do not have the literacy skills necessary to function effectively in everyday life.
- Youth often hide their literacy and learning challenges.
- Low literacy can result in youth crime, unemployment, and dropping out of school.
- Without your help and literacy intervention, youth could be caught in a cycle of defeat.

#### How Can You Help?

There are resources and services available to you. Literacy Link South Central is willing to meet with you to see if there is an opportunity for an on-going partnership. At the upcoming community forum we will be discussing your experiences and how to help you to help youth! You could learn how to make your programs and written work more sensitive to the literacy needs of your youth. Literacy sensitivity training for your staff is also an option.

Come to the "Youth Services and Literacy Community Forum" to explore this issue further.

#### Do you have any questions?

Contact Literacy Link South Central

Phone: 681-7303 (1-800-561-6896)

E-mail: [literacylink@bellnet.ca](mailto:literacylink@bellnet.ca)



## Appendix #6

### Youth Services and Literacy Community Forum



- Why ?:** To learn more about the hidden issue of literacy and how it affects the youth population that you work with.
- Who ?:** Youth Service Providers  
Anybody that works with individuals between 16 and 24 years of age.
- Date ?:** Monday May 13, 2002
- Time ?:** 9:30 to noon  
Noon until 1 PM.  
(lunch and chat provided!)
- Location ?:** Four Points Sheraton  
1150 Wellington Road  
London, Ontario
- Cost ? :** **Free!! (Can you believe it !?!!)**

#### R.S.V.P. :

- Please reply by **May 6th**, 2002.
- In order to keep the workshop interactive, a maximum of 25 people will be accepted.

To confirm your attendance contact "Literacy Link South Central" using one of the following methods:

**Phone:** 681- 7307 (1-800-561-6896)

**E-mail:** [literacylink@bellnet.ca](mailto:literacylink@bellnet.ca)



## Appendix #7

**Youth Literacy Forum**  
May 13th, 2002  
9:30 am - 1:00 pm  
Four Points Sheraton Hotel

### **AGENDA**

9:00 am - 9:30 am	Registration
9:30 am - 9:45 am	Tamara Riddle - Executive Director - Literacy Link South Central Anne Marie Curtin - Coordinator - Youth Literacy Projects
9:45 am - 10:10 am	Literacy and Youth: Partnership Models - Anne Marie Curtin Why are you here? What participants hope to get from the day...
10:10 am - 10:30 am	Ice breaker - what does literacy really mean?
10:30 am - 10:40 am	Anne Marie Curtin - experiences with youth and literacy - lessons learned
10:40 am - 11:15 am	Small group activity - worksheet #1 "Drawing on your own Experience"
11:15 am - 11:30 am	What can LLSC provide to youth agencies? - Tamara
11:30 am - 11:50 am	Small group activity- worksheet #2 "Literacy Awareness - Pros and Cons"
11:50 am-12:00 noon	Wrap up - Evaluation and Future Steps
12:00 noon - 1:00 pm	Please join us for lunch!

*This workshop has been brought to you by Literacy Link South Central and The Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford Local Training Board*

## Appendix #8



### **What Does It Mean To Be Literate?**

**Take a moment within your small group and think about what it means to someone to be literate?  
What kinds of opportunities does literacy bring someone?  
What barriers do low literacy skills present? What do low literacy skills mean when it comes to participating in society?**

Appendix #9

Youth Literacy Forum - Worksheet #1



"Drawing on your Own Experience"

What experiences have you had with youth where you have identified low literacy skills as a barrier?	What was your response to this issue?	What supports, if any, would have improved your ability to respond to this issue?
Example: I have had clients who were not capable of filling out their own resumes or job applications due to poor reading and writing skills.	I filled out their resumes and job applications.	I would have liked to have known where I could refer these clients for an assessment in our community.

Youth Literacy Forum - Worksheet #2

**"Literacy Awareness - Pros and Cons"**

Literacy Intervention	Pros	Cons
<p>Clear Writing:</p> <p>Analysis of publicity materials</p> <p>Training for staff who develop printed materials for general public or individual clients</p>		
<p>Literacy Audit:</p> <p>How sensitive is your organization to someone walking in with low literacy skills?</p>		

## Appendix #10

### Report: Youth and Literacy Forum May 13, 2002

#### What do you need from Literacy Link South Central?

Training	Tools
<p data-bbox="199 562 329 594">How to...</p> <ul data-bbox="248 636 833 856" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="248 636 776 667">• Recognize people with literacy issues</li><li data-bbox="248 674 776 741">• Approach the subject without making them uncomfortable</li><li data-bbox="248 747 833 814">• Modify our marketing/written material so that it's easier to read</li><li data-bbox="248 821 630 852">• Retain youth in a program</li></ul>	<ul data-bbox="902 636 1414 888" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="902 636 1390 703">• Resources about teaching a person to read and write</li><li data-bbox="902 709 1406 777">• Tests to determine a client's current abilities</li><li data-bbox="902 783 1414 888">• Contact info: Who do I contact when I have a client who needs help with reading and writing?</li></ul>

#### What are your thoughts on 'Literacy' and your clients?

"Literacy is not our focus because...

- we tend to help people in crisis
- it is not a basic need; it would have to be addressed in a "post-crisis" phase

"Literacy is not our clients' focus because they...

- stay with an agency only as long as they are in crisis, i.e., clients wouldn't be with us long enough to learn reading and writing
- don't believe they have literacy needs
- think they can 'get around it' when they are told, "You need Gr. 12 to get this job...."
- have cultural language issues

**Finish this statement: "People with average to high literacy skills..."**

<b>can...</b>	<b>feel...</b>	<b>have...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- read</li> <li>- write</li> <li>- understand</li> <li>- communicate</li> <li>- pass these skills to their children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- normal</li> <li>- like a part of society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- independence</li> <li>- a sense of accomplishment</li> <li>- confidence in decision-making ("I know <i>this</i> choice is better than <i>that</i> choice because...")</li> </ul>

**What Literacy Link South Central should know about high risk youth:**

1. The classroom setting does not usually work for high-risk youth.
2. Referring our clients to another agency (e.g. a literacy program) is ineffective because they probably won't go.

**What might succeed in bringing literacy help to your clients?**

<p><b>Train me to...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognize when a client needs literacy help and approach the topic with sensitivity</li> <li>• incorporate reading/writing into something I already do with my clients (e.g. small group sessions on job searching)</li> <li>• tutor reading/writing</li> </ul>	<p><b>Send a literacy trainer to my agency to...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be here on a regular, on-going basis</li> <li>• give clients the literacy training they need, preferably tailored to their individual needs.</li> </ul>
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**What happens next?**

1. Literacy Link South Central (LLSC) will hold a Clear Writing Workshop specifically for Youth Service Providers in August (more details as they develop). The concepts of Clear Writing are easy to learn and to use. In terms of literacy training, this may be a good place to start.
2. Please feel free to call us at any time if you have questions, other suggestions or if you'd like copies of booklets, etc. Call (519) 681-7307