



Workplace Literacy & Essential Skills

Embedding Practice, Preparing Providers

This is the third in a series of The Centre for Literacy's summer institutes devoted to issues in workplace literacy and essential skills. The first explored the question What Works and Why? From that meeting we learned that while there is research and some consensus about effective models of workplace literacy and essential skills (WES) programs, there has been limited long-term evaluation of outcomes, apart from some recent studies in NZ and the UK.

The 2010 institute asked What Counts and Why? It examined how policy and accountability requirements in different contexts determine what is taught to whom and how success is measured. A literature review and the many examples shared by Canadian and international participants highlighted an emerging trend to recognize both social capital and human capital outcomes of WES investments. Researchers are looking for ways to measure gain in individual skill and knowledge, as well as capture less tangible gains in social relationships and networks that contribute to community well-being.

Embedding, training, engaging

Several new themes emerged from the 2010 institute, specifically around questions of embedded teaching and learning and the qualifications and professionalism of WES providers. The 2011 institute will focus on these as well as on the continuing preoccupation of engaging employers and learners. These themes connect to questions that face the entire literacy field, not only workplace providers.

Embedding, like many terms in education, has no universally accepted definition. One definition from the UK says: "Embedded teaching and learning combines the development of literacy, language and numeracy with vocational and other skills." (<http://rwp.qia.oxi.net/embeddedlearning/search.cfm>) A study on the impact of embedded approaches to literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) on 1,916 learners in 79 vocational programs in England found a 16% higher retention and 26% higher course success rates in embedded courses. However, staffing was a factor. When one teacher was responsible for teaching vocational skills and LLN, the probability of learners succeeding on literacy and numeracy qualifications was lower. Having recognized LLN qualifications, England can

track these outcomes. The study concluded:

Adult LLN are complex areas to teach. Managers should not assume that the benefits of embedding can be achieved by simply adding LLN to the vocational teacher's responsibilities. Any assumptions that adult LLN are easy to teach should be avoided. This research shows that learners benefit from being taught by teams of staff, each with their different areas of expertise, working closely together.

(NRDC, "You wouldn't expect a maths teacher to teach plastering...", 2007)

The study also found that policy and institutional features were important to the potential success of embedding. We might ask if one can embed literacy and essential skills in an organization that does have a learning culture.

Recent studies in Australia have reached similar conclusions. They have coined the phrase "built-in, not bolted-on" as a way to consider the questions related to the design and practice of embedding.

What kind and level of training or qualification does a literacy provider need to be able to design curriculum and implement the practice to embed literacy and essential skills? Do community and workplace providers need the same training? These questions apply to both initial training and professional development.

An Australian study found that the biggest influence on a literacy practitioner's professional development needs and attitudes is whether the practitioner is a specialist trainer, vocational trainer or volunteer, and that even within these sectors experiences differ significantly. Location in large urban or in regional and isolated areas, and employment status all have implications on access to professional development for paid instructors. (NCVER Breakfast briefings, 2006).

What does it mean to be a professional? What does it mean to behave "professionally" if one does not have professional training? Should there be a common core to the training for a community provider and a workplace provider? Is it reasonable to expect that all community providers want to be, should be or can be workplace providers? Can appropriate and complementary roles be defined for community and workplace providers?

In June, The Centre will be near the end of the second year of Measures of Success, the three-year project with Nova Scotia Labour and Workforce Development and Workplace Education Manitoba to create an evaluation model to capture and compare quantitative and qualitative outcomes from workplace literacy and essential skills programs. We will share early findings from the project and look at the skill level of the providers in two provinces that have established training and management models.

We are pleased to have Ann McKeown from The National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (NRDC) and Ann Kelly from Griffiths University, Australia. They bring perspectives from their years of work on embedding and on qualifications for literacy and workplace providers.

Invitees

Ann Kelly, PhD, is at the School of Education and Professional Studies, Adult & Vocational Education, Griffiths University in Australia. Previously, she worked in a technical and further education institution managing a range of adult literacy activities for over twenty years. She implemented the first centrally-funded workplace literacy programs in Queensland and developed a vocational graduate certificate in adult literacy and numeracy to prepare teachers to work in the adult literacy/numeracy field. She has been a volunteer in adult literacy professional associations at the state and national levels, serving as president at both levels, and chairperson of a national literacy federation.

Anne McKeown is Professional Development Manager for the London Strategic Unit at the National Research and Development Centre (NRDC) for adult literacy and numeracy (UK). Her background is in ESOL teaching and teacher education in adult language, literacy and numeracy (LLN). Her recent research includes examining the role of unions in workplace ESOL and looking at programs for pre-service LLN teacher education. Recent presentations have included ESOL in the workplace for a Skills for Life at Work seminar, and ESOL and functional skills. Anne has served as Chair of the National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA) the national forum and association for ESOL teachers in the UK.



A UNIQUE FORMAT

The Institute offers a unique opportunity to share and create knowledge in a collaborative environment with a limited number of participants (100). We build the program around the experience and expertise of those who register. If you register, you may become a presenter. Participants stay together for three days from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. After hours, there are optional sessions with demonstrations, and small group discussions for those who want to explore a specific issue or study a model in greater depth.

If you simply want to listen but not present, we still ask you to identify relevant topics or themes from your own experience to weave into our discussions. Time is allotted each day to talk, reflect and debate with colleagues. You can share information and post displays on free tables, and use the breakfast, lunch, breaks and after-hours sessions to network.

You will leave with a new understanding of the issues, access to new resources, people and practices, and ideas for adaptations and new collaborations in your own milieu.

SCHEDULE

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday
June 27, 28 and 29, 2011 • 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Monday and Tuesday after 3:00 p.m.: Optional demonstrations, networking, and webinars
Daily schedule finalized two weeks before the Institute.

FEE

Includes materials, continental breakfasts, lunches and refreshments
Early-bird registration (until May 1, 2011)\$555
After May 1, 2011.....\$595
All amounts must be paid in Canadian dollars.

ACCOMMODATIONS

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Hotel du Fort within easy access of Dawson College where the Institute will take place and close to downtown shopping and attractions. The hotel is offering a special rate of \$135/single or \$145/double occupancy. They will hold the rooms until May 26, 2011. After that, reservations will be based on availability. For those who may want to add on holiday time before or after the Institute, The Montreal International Jazz Fest runs from June 25 to July 4, 2011.

For reservations, contact the hotel directly:

Hotel du Fort – 1390 rue du Fort,
Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H3H 2R7
Tel.: 514-938-8333 or 1-800-565-6333
Fax: 514-938-2078
E-mail: reserve@hoteldufort.com
Ask for The Centre for Literacy Summer Institute



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Online registration is available from our website:
www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/inst/sli2011/index11.htm

Literacy for the 21st century: A guiding definition

Literacy involves a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. The need and demand for these abilities vary in different societies. In a technological society, the concept is expanding to include the media and electronic text in addition to alphabets and numbers. Individuals must be given life-long learning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes reading, writing, and the critical understanding and decision-making abilities they need in their communities.

Source: The Centre for Literacy

The Centre for Literacy of Quebec is a national centre of expertise that supports best practices and informed policy development in literacy and essential skills, by creating bridges between research, policy and practice. The Centre, in partnership with Manitoba and Nova Scotia, currently manages Measures of Success, a project to develop a new evaluation model to measure and track longer-term impacts of workplace literacy and essential skills initiatives. **www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca**

Workplace Education Manitoba

Workplace Education Manitoba (WEM) has been enhancing Essential Skills awareness, application and enhanced functioning in response to workplace requests for Essential Skills solutions since 1991. Through original research, WEM supports business, labour and practitioners by offering workplace Essential Skills assessments and developing and delivering Essential Skills training and human resource solutions. **www.wem.mb.ca**

The Department of Labour Workforce Development works to provide fairness, safety and prosperity for all Nova Scotians by helping them live, learn and work to their highest potential. The department works to protect the public and maintain and grow a safe and prosperous workforce in Nova Scotia with a strong focus on safety, skill development, regulation, education and building partnerships. **www.gov.ns.ca/lwd/**

ABC Life Literacy Canada is a non-profit organization that inspires Canadians to increase their literacy skills. It connects and mobilizes business, unions, government, communities and individuals to support lifelong learning and achieve its goals through leadership in programs, communications and partnerships. ABC Life Literacy Canada envisions a Canada where everyone has the skills they need to live a fully engaged life. **www.abclifeliteracy.ca**

Canadian Literacy and Learning Network is a national organization that works with many stakeholders to enhance literacy and essential skills in Canada. In partnership with others it builds and strengthens the capacity of literacy and essential organizations by creating, gathering and sharing information and knowledge on key topics and issues. **www.literacy.ca**

The National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) is Canada's literacy and essential skills network. NALD provides internet-based literacy and essential skills information and resources in both official languages, including a state-of-the-art digital library. NALD@Work emphasizes the development of workplace essential skills – the firm foundation required to succeed in a competitive society and a global economy. **www.nald.ca / www.naldatwork.ca**

National Research and Development Centre (NRDC) is the UK's national independent centre for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. Its aim is to improve professional practice and inform policy. Widely recognized for its expertise, the centre has an international reputation and works across the UK and worldwide. **www.nrdc.org.uk**

Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC) makes adult learning opportunities possible by inspiring ideas and informing action. They work to ensure all adults in Ontario benefit from literacy by gathering data and intelligence, developing partnerships, building capacity and advising policy. As a partnership development organization, they support learning wherever it happens – at work, at home or in the community. **www.on.literacy.ca**

Workbase The New Zealand Centre for Workforce Literacy Development, is a not-for-profit organization established in 1991 to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of adult New Zealanders. Workbase tailors literacy solutions for business, unions, industry training, the education sector and government. It is using its experience to support new initiatives in health and financial literacy. **www.workbase.org.nz**

Dawson College is the largest English-language CEGEP in Quebec with over 10,000 students enrolled full- and part-time in more than 50 fields of study, preparing them for university studies or for immediate employment. The College is proud of the diversity of languages and cultures represented among its students, faculty and staff. Dawson College housed The Centre for Literacy from 1989 to 2009. **www.dawsoncollege.qc.ca**