

Common Assessment Tools Pilot
in Three Communities:
Kitchener-Waterloo,
London,
Sudbury Anglophone
and Sudbury Francophone

Final Project Report

Project Partners:

Project READ Literacy Network Waterloo-
Wellington
College Boreal
Literacy Link South Central
Sudbury Catholic District School Board
Thames Valley District School Board

Funded by: Ontario Ministry of Education,
Adult Education Unit in cooperation with
Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

July 4, 2008



Table of Contents:

Executive Summary	Page 3
Context, Scope, Goals and Process	Page 7
Local Reports – Kitchener-Waterloo, London, Sudbury Anglophone and Sudbury Francophone	Page 11
Common Results and Findings	Page 12
Outcomes and Recommendations	Page 19
Appendices	Page 26
• Financial Statement	
• Literature Review of Assessment Practices in Adult Education	
• Project Partners Contact Information	
• List of Participating Agencies for each Pilot Community	
• Report Templates	
• Evaluation Report prepared by Davidson Communications & Training (this report has a separate table of contents)	

Executive Summary

Project Overview:

Project READ Literacy Network Waterloo-Wellington, in partnership with four agencies (College Boreal, Literacy Link South Central, Sudbury Catholic District School Board and Thames Valley District School Board) in four communities (Kitchener-Waterloo, London and Sudbury – Anglophone and Francophone) conducted a field test of four assessment tools and resources to ascertain how those tools informed and influenced transitions of learners and clients within the adult education and training system. We gathered information from Assessors, agencies and learners/clients on how useful and informative each tool/resource was across a variety of situations and goal pathways, including employment, employment training, academic upgrading and post-secondary preparation. In total, 754 assessments were conducted across the province. This project was a initial exploration of the key issues facing adult education and training including a common language for discussing learner/client skill levels, readiness for learners to transition to the next step in their pathway and the identification of goal pathways.

The assessment tools and resources utilized included CAMERA (Communications And Math Employment Readiness Assessment) Placement and Diagnostic tools, TOWES G2 (Test of Workplace Essential Skills) both paper-based and online, Ontario Skills Passport Check In and PDQ (Prose/Document/Quantitative) online assessment tool. Assessors could also choose to use “Other” assessments such as in-house tools or the TOWES G1. Most of the tools were directly based on the Essential Skills five level, 500-point scale. The CAMERA Assessment tools were based on the LBS levels and provided an outline of how the levels compared to the Essential Skills. Assessors were provided with extensive training on each of the tools as available by the tools originators.

Forty-one (41) service delivery agencies that provide a variety of programs were involved in each of the pilot communities including Literacy & Basic Skills (LBS), Job Connect, Adult Credit, English as a Second Language (ESL), Employment Assistance Services (EAS), WSIB, and Ontario Works. There was limited participation by two cultural streams, Native and Deaf/Hard of Hearing. There was significant participation by Francophone programs in the Sudbury pilot. Both French language and English language assessment tools were used with Francophone students in the Sudbury pilot. (Please refer to the Appendix for a complete agency list)

Project READ provided overall project management including research, communications facilitation, design and implementation of evaluation, reporting, financial management and coordination of training for all assessment tools/resources. Project READ also provided local coordination of the Kitchener pilot. The other partners each provided leadership in their respective communities: London – Thames Valley District School Board and Literacy Link South Central; Sudbury Anglophone – Sudbury Catholic District School Board; Sudbury Francophone – College Boreal. In each community, the lead organizations involved many local agencies for the selection of field-test subjects. These subjects were adults (clients, students or learners) either already involved with their agencies or new to the system.

Key Results and Recommendations:

- All of the tools can be used in a variety of adult employment and training programs to assess Essential Skills levels and all reflect fair assessment practices. Although, some tools are more suited to particular goal pathways or transitions. Overall, **CAMERA tools (placement and diagnostic) were most preferred by assessors** for a variety of reasons (evaluation criteria). Recommendations for use of assessment tools/resources reflects their appropriateness to the goal pathway and/or program destination, specifically:
 - CAMERA for employment and further education and training (LBS or foundational training and employment-readiness). The tool was deemed very useful in determining Essential Skills (ES) levels. Please note that CAMERA is the only tool that measures Writing skills, but it does not test above Essential Skills Level 3. CAMERA was rated highly for ease of use, ease of understanding the results, being comfortable for learners, and useful for learners to know their Essential Skill levels.
 - PDQ for further education & training (LBS, academic upgrading, employment-readiness), employment, and independence. It was rated as very useful for determining ES levels.
 - TOWES G2 for further education & training (employment-readiness, higher level academic upgrading and apprenticeship) and employment in trades. TOWES G2 Online was rated as somewhat useful for determining ES levels and the G2 paper-based was rated as useful.
 - OSP Check In for employment, further education and training (employment readiness training), and independence. It was rated as useful for determining ES levels but it depended on self-report by the learner. OSP Check In is an exploratory tool that works best when used along with a more diagnostic assessment tool such as CAMERA or PDQ to confirm ES levels. It was helpful as an intake interview tool. It was rated highly for each of use and ease of understanding the results.

It is important to note that while assessors reported that all the tools were capable of identifying Essential Skills levels and informing transitions, an assessment of skill levels is only one determinant of many when deciding if and when a learner/client is ready to transition to their next step.

*For more information on the “Provincial Summary Results by Assessment Tools”, refer to Table 5 in the Evaluation Report Appendix.

- **Profile of the average learner/client** who participated in the pilot: Female (52.5%), aged 19-24 (34%), had some high school education (51%), educated in Canada (83.5%), had further education and training as a goal (58.5%), had an average of Essential Skills levels of 3 in Reading, Numeracy, and Writing and level 2 in Document Use.

- **Training and professional development on the assessment tools/resources** along with experience with Essential Skills and previous knowledge and skills in the area of academic/educational assessments were **absolutely vital** to building an Assessor's capacity to administer the four assessments, interpret the results and provide guidance to the client/student. Training on assessment will be key to any broad roll out of assessment tools across the province. *“Individuals who do more explicit, detailed assessment (not intake interviews) really need a solid grounding in adult education and training. Without experience it was more difficult for people to explain to clients why they had certain results and to give clear examples of how to improve their skills.”* (best practice quote from Assessor) Also suggested in best practices was the opportunity to practice administering the tool within the Assessor's agency. Being able to discuss with other, more experienced assessors with thorough knowledge of the particular tool was another key support for Assessors learning a new assessment tool/resource.
- The project was successful in **building the capacity, knowledge and awareness of assessment tools and practices amongst a broad range of assessors, learners/clients and other stakeholders**. Most people involved found it a positive experience with the exception of the Sudbury Francophone community. While assessors in that community provided somewhat favourable results around project communication, training and expectations for the 184 assessments conducted, they expressed difficulties with language and vocabulary related to the assessment tools and results. This indicates that the language barrier played a significant role in the experience of assessors and learners. It is important to note that the Sudbury Francophone pilot tested both English and French versions of the tools with Francophone learners/clients, as available (PDQ, OSP Check In and TOWES G2 have French versions and CAMERA English version was used to assess English skills of Francophone students).
- *“All the tools have different strengths and weaknesses.” “Keep in mind that one size does not fit all. It is necessary to carefully choose which assessment to use.”* These comments from assessors highlight the recommendation that a “tool kit” approach to assessment is important in adult education and training. Assessors and clients/learners need a variety of tools for the diversity of needs, program contexts, skill levels and goal pathways. **Any mass implementation of common assessment should include 4 key elements:** professional development and training; guidelines for the administration and interpretation of assessment tools and results; mentoring by experienced assessors to guide the development of assessment best practices among peers; and a phasing in or practice piloting of various tools/resource over an extended timeline. This staged approach will result in a stronger knowledge base amongst assessors, more consistent use of assessment tools/resources and more informed learners/clients.
- The Canadian and World Literature Review of Assessment Practices in Adult Education that was prepared for this project indicates that Ontario like most other jurisdictions is making a concerted effort to develop effective, efficient and

meaningful assessment tools and reports that respect learners, communicate to stakeholders (employers among them) and truly recognize achievements in skills, knowledge and abilities. *“There is a need for a new assessment language that describes learning outcomes in terms of what learners will be able to do at the end of their training, describe learning gains in meaningful ways to key and various stakeholders, and clearly link skill levels to other models in use. (Glass, Kallio, Goforth, 2007)”* The Review also revealed that in **most jurisdictions a variety of tools** are used depending on the program context, goal pathway and key stakeholders expectations. *“Know the goal of the learner to help direct which tool to use. The flexibility of the tools with the client’s goal in mind is outstanding.”* (Assessor best practice comment) While tools may vary country-to-country, province-to-province, agreement on best practices of assessment is common. In this respect Ontario is on track. We seek to provide assessments that are comfortable for the learner, provide clear, relevant results and are based around the needs of adults in their various life roles – parent, worker, citizen. (For a complete list of best practices, please refer to the Appendix – Literature Review.)

Context, Scope, Goals and Process

Context and Scope:

The *Ontario Learns* report identified the importance of local partnerships among delivery agencies and community organizations that create seamless pathways for adult learners and enrich the quality and variety of programming to meet local needs. Inherent in strong partnerships are mutual understanding and philosophy, compatible goals and protocols, and a common language to exchange information and support clients/learners. A common language is key to assessing prior learning and skills and being able to share that information with across agencies and educators.

Concurrently, the government funded the *Learner Skills Attainment* initiative, which sought to create a framework to communicate learner progress in a reliable, valid and transparent way. Further, the goals were to describe learning outcomes in terms of what a learner will be able to do or where a learner will be able to go (next step options) upon the completion of their literacy training and to describe gains in skills and knowledge in a meaningful way to key stakeholders such as Apprenticeship, Job Connect, Ontario Works and employers. The framework of assessment will include the critical skills needed in reading text, document use and numeracy (all part of the Essential Skills) for the following goal pathways (5 key transitions for LBS learners): Secondary Credit; Postsecondary Education; Apprenticeship; Employment; and Independence.

This project was built on the *Ontario Learns* and the *Learner Skills Attainment* foundation. Its purpose was to demonstrate a consistent and accurate approach to assessing learners skills using the Essential Skills scale across high school credit and literacy programs for adults using a variety of assessment tools and resources. As well, this project conducted field tests regarding the feasibility of the application of those tools in assisting adult learners to transition to the next step of their learning. Essential Skills (five levels, 9 domains, 500-point scale) provided the common language for the assessment tools and the common language for the assessors involved in this pilot project. The Common Assessment Pilot project was not focused on whether the tools/resources could accurately measure learning progress overtime rather it was on the ability of the tools/resources to identify Essential Skills levels and to inform transitions.

Three communities were identified for their variety of adult education and training programs, their cultural diversity and their capacity to conduct the assessment tool field tests. Kitchener-Waterloo, London, Sudbury-Anglophone and Sudbury-Francophone each had strong lead organizations ready to guide the pilot in their community. These organizations included Thames Valley District School Board and Literacy Link South Central (London), Sudbury Catholic District School Board (Sudbury Anglophone); College Boreal (Sudbury Francophone).

Goals/Outcomes:

By the end of the project, we planned to accomplished the following outcomes:

- Greater understanding of existing assessment tools and practices being utilized in Canada and other countries for entry and exit purposes
- Enhanced communication among key stakeholders involved in the Learner Skill Attainment Initiative
- Enhanced communication at the local level among the providers of employment, adult credit, postsecondary, apprenticeship and foundational training for adults
- Recommendations for best practices and tools for assessment in order to improve the capacity of school boards, colleges and community-based agencies in placing adults in the right program
- Deeper understanding amongst frontline staff in adult credit and non-credit, adult education settings regarding the effectiveness of specific tools
- Informed understanding enabling the forward movement of adult education policy development

Proposed Project Deliverables:

1. Establishment of local community networks
2. A representative to participate on the provincial pilot project advisory group (Learner Skill Attainment Initiative)
3. A literature review of recent Canadian and world research on assessment practices for adult learners
4. Results from field-testing (600 assessments conducted amongst the three communities) the capability of assessment tools and approaches (entry and exit assessments) based on the Essential Skills to demonstrate learner skill attainment and readiness for transition to learner destinations including employment, adult credit programs, postsecondary education and foundations for learning. The four assessment tools/resources are: CAMERA (Communications and Math Employment Readiness Assessment), TOWES (Test of Workplace Essential Skills), OSP Essential Skills & Work Habits Check In and PDQ (Prose/Document/Quantitative Profile)
5. Best practices of using the assessment tools to improve the capacity of school board, colleges and community-based agencies in placing adult learners in the right program
6. An Interim Project Report and a Final Project Report including recommendations for the development of adult education policy framework

Field Test Process:

Our initial step was to gather as many agency representatives from adult education and training from each of the three communities to discuss the project's goals, outcomes and deliverables as well as to develop a common commitment to the project. From this initial meeting, community leads were identified for the four communities. In turn, these leads gathered local agency representatives to identify a community approach to the project within the parameters set out in the proposal. Each community decided on a slightly different approach to choosing learners/clients, involving various community partners and choosing Assessors. (Please refer to the local reports for more detailed information.) Each community was required to involve a wide variety of learners/clients with varying goal pathways from the range of Adult Education programs in the community. This

diversity helped us to address the issue of which assessment tools/resources benefit which type of learners/clients in which adult education contexts.

“Training and professional development had a significant impact on building assessor capacity and awareness about effective assessment tools and practices.” – Evaluation result

Providing training or professional development to all the assessment tools/resources was vital to the success of this project. Project READ coordinated training for Assessors from all Anglophone communities on the following tools: OSP Check In (3 hours on November 21, 2007) and CAMERA (13 hours on November 22 & 23, 2007). PDQ had a self-directed, online tutorial, which was available only in English. Assessors were responsible to access the PDQ tutorial individually and all were offered an opportunity to take the full online PDQ test. In Kitchener, Project READ Literacy Network coordinated a TOWES orientation (3.5 hours overview & debriefing on December 13, 2007 & February 13 & 14, 2008) to local Assessors in cooperation with the local college, Conestoga. The Network also provided an Essential Skills overview (2.5 hours on November 16, 2007). London conducted TOWES orientation with their local college, Fanshawe. The Sudbury Catholic District School Board connected with their local college to access TOWES testing. College Boreal, the Francophone Sudbury Lead organization, held training for the PDQ and TOWES in French. As well, they accessed OSP Check In training via a representative from the Ministry of Education, which also provided the French version of the resource. All of the Francophone training took place in January 2008. The costs associated with accessing the tools/resources ranged from free to \$65 per test. While the cost of training on each of the tools ranged from free to \$450 per person. It is interesting to note that evaluation results indicate “the cost of the assessment tool did not have a significant impact on the assessor’s perceived value of the tool or on the recommendation for purchasing the tool.”

Project READ engaged an Evaluation Consultant, Cindy Davidson, to develop the evaluation tools and process. This was a key step since we needed a common evaluation approach across the four communities for consistent data gathering and reporting. A great deal of discussion took place amongst the lead organizations, Project READ staff, and Ministry staff (TCU – Training, Colleges and Universities and ED – Education) to develop the evaluation tools and process. It was decided that for each client/learner assessed, an assessor would complete an evaluation of the assessment itself including feedback from the learner, a follow-up with the learner after twenty-four hours of intervention and feedback from the agency receiving the transitioning learner, if possible. Each learner who participated was provided a gift card from a local business as an incentive to stay in communication with the assessor and answer the evaluation questions. Intervention was considered to be any program, service or employment that the client/learner would participate in over the course of the pilot timeline, e.g. LBS classroom program at a college. The twenty-four hours could take place over a week or more depending on the program or service, e.g. twenty-four hours of one-to-one LBS tutoring might take a few weeks to accumulate, whereas 24 hours might be accomplished over one week in a full time employment training program.

In all, three evaluation tools were developed for this project, specifically: an Assessment Evaluation Online Survey (one completed for each assessment conducted); an Assessors Evaluation Online Survey (one completed by each assessor); and a Stakeholder Overall Project Evaluation Online Survey (one completed by each project partner and stakeholder). The Assessors Evaluation was conducted at the end of the field test period to gather hindsight reflections and practices. The Overall Project Evaluation focused on the project outcomes and deliverables as well as the process and approaches used. The tools were provided via the Internet through “SurveyMonkey”, an online survey website, because of the geographic spread of the communities (two in southern Ontario and two in northern Ontario). As well, the website allowed for tracking of inputs, generating of reports and ease of data entry. An orientation document and a teleconference was provided to all Assessors for each evaluation tool to clarify its use and parameters. This personal communication ensured that everyone involved had a thorough understanding of the purpose and timing for each evaluation tool. As well, the Evaluation Consultant provided ongoing support to all leads and communities in the case of minor technical glitches and extended reporting deadlines.

Project READ developed a bi-monthly reporting template for leads to document their ongoing progress. (Please refer to the Appendix for a copy of the report.) We also developed several other templates including an invoice for services rendered, letters of agreement outlining project activity commitments for each agency, participation agreements for clients/learners including a release of information clause, and a project overview. These templates ensured accurate financial management as well as accountability for performance of project objectives.

Project Timeline:

October to December –

- Gathered participating agencies in local groups and oriented them to the project goals and expectations; ensured all agencies signed letters of agreement
- Finalized field test protocol and evaluation tools and process
- Orient all participating assessors to evaluation tools via teleconference
- Provided initial training for assessment tools/resources, purchased adequate number of tools, as well as access codes for online tools – PDQ, TOWES G2 online

January to April –

- Field tests conducted in all communities with local communication facilitated by lead agencies
- Ongoing support provided to all communities by Project READ including assessment tool support and expertise, financial administration, and evaluation guidance and reporting
- Bi-monthly reports on progress submitted by all communities to Project READ

May to July –

- Completion of all assessment evaluations, completion of Assessors Evaluation and completion of Stakeholders Overall Project Evaluation
- Analysis of all data and results and completion of final project report
- Submission of all invoices, reconciliation and preparation of financial report

Local Reports – Kitchener-Waterloo, London, Sudbury Anglophone and Sudbury Francophone

The following section contains the Local Reports as written by the Project Partners in each community:

- Kitchener-Waterloo: Project READ Literacy Network Waterloo-Wellington
- London: Thames Valley District School Board and Literacy Link South Central
- Sudbury Francophone: College Boreal
- Sudbury Anglophone: Sudbury Catholic District School Board

Common Results and Findings

Amongst the four pilot sites, 41 agencies participated in the field-testing of assessment tools/resources and they conducted 754 assessments. Specifically: Nineteen agencies participated in the Kitchener-Waterloo area conducting 268 assessments; in London, eleven agencies provided 275 assessments; Sudbury Catholic District School Board conducted 27 assessments; and the Sudbury-Francophone community involved eight agencies in 184 assessments. In this section of the report, common trends and results amongst all pilot communities have been documented with some regional differences noted. The Local Community Reports contain specific regional trends and results as do the Evaluation Reports (see Appendix).

All of the assessment tools/resources were used to some degree within the pilot communities. OSP Check In was used 32% of the time, PDQ 24%, CAMERA tools 23% and TOWES G2 paper 21%. The least used tool was the TOWES G2 online (less than 1%). When looking at the use of tools and learner/client profile the following trends occurred: TOWES G2 online was used with predominantly females (60%), aged 25 – 44 with post secondary education (60%), not educated in Canada (40%) with a goal path of employment; OSP was used with mostly females, aged 25 – 44 with some high school, 18% not educated in Canada with a goal path of further education and training (employment was a close second); PDQ was used with mostly females, aged 25 – 44, with some high school, only 17.5% not educated in Canada with a further education and training goal path; and CAMERA was used with both males and females, ages 25 – 44 with some high school, 21% not educated in Canada with education and training and employment goal paths. We cannot necessarily conclude that the tools are the best options for each of these profile groups because all communities were asked to use all tools with all types of learners.

In 67% of assessments, the tools were used to assess learners skills at an ongoing progress point, in other words the learner was already in the program and had been given an initial assessment. For 13%, the tool was an initial assessment of their skills levels. An important note about measuring progress – *“Most of the assessors said they used the tools at a time for measuring ongoing progress, but overall not a significant number of assessors said any of the tool were useful for this purpose. This could be due to confusion around the interpretation of the ‘timing of assessment’.”* (Evaluation Report, Executive Summary). To accurately judge a tool’s ability to measure progress over time, a field test over a longer time period is merited. The tool could then be administered consistently over time including initial, ongoing and exit periods and compared with the results of other validated tools for measuring Essential Skills levels to check for accuracy in skills measurement.

Of the adults assessed, 52.5% were female and 47.5% were male. They were predominantly aged 19 - 24 years (34%) or 25 – 44 years (33%) and had either completed high school (22%) or had some high school education (51%). A regional difference emerged in the age ranges and goal pathways. In Kitchener and London, the average learner profile was a female, aged 25 – 44 with employment as the goal path. While in both Sudbury communities, the goal path was further education and training, aged 19 – 24 and split between female (Francophone) and male (Anglophone). The vast majority of learners was educated in Canada (83.5%) and had either further education and training (58.5%) or employment (36%) as their stated goal pathway. Of

those adults who had further education and training as their goal pathway, 26% were interested in adult credits and 17.5% were interested in post-secondary education including Apprenticeship. There was an interesting regional difference in goal pathways amongst the four communities. In both Sudbury communities ‘Further Training’ was the main goal path and ‘Employment’ was the main goal in London and Kitchener. All learners were assessed for their reading skills, the majority for document use and writing, though less than the other domains. The average Essential Skill levels of participating learners/clients were as follows: Level 3 in Reading Text, Level 2 in Document Use, Level 3 in Numeracy and Level 3 in Writing. It is important to note that not all of the assessment tools/resources tested the Writing domain only CAMERA and OSP had that option. Since the CAMERA results were based on LBS levels and required translation to ES levels, the question arose whether all Assessors accurately translated and documented the ES levels on the Assessment Evaluation Survey.

During the pilot, 42 assessors participated across the four test communities. 68% of assessors came from the LBS (Literacy and Basic Skills) sector with the next highest sector being Employment Assistance Services (EAS). All sectors were represented even minimally including Job Connect, Adult Credit, Academic Upgrading, Ontario Works and LINC/Language Assessment. Experience in academic assessment formed an important basis for administering and interpreting assessments. 50% of assessors had over five years experience in conducting assessments in their current job and another 33% had between one and five years experience. Assessors were asked about their previous experience with assessment in other sectors and 80% of assessors stated they had previous experience mostly in LBS, school system and labour adjustment contexts. In regard to training on the various tools, all but one Assessor took part in the professional development sessions. We asked Assessors about any training on the tools that they had received prior to the pilot project. Most reported that they had taken training on assessment and Essential Skills and a few had training on OSP web site and TOWES. We also asked Assessors to check off which of the tools they had used prior to the project. They responded that 6% had used the OSP website, 5% had used the TOWES G2 paper-based tool and 3% had used the CAMERA Placement and Diagnostic Tools. No one had used the PDQ tool. Therefore for most Assessors, this project provided an opportunity to receive training on and administer tools new to their practice.

An important area of concern was how useful the tool was from the assessor’s perspective and what factors influenced their decision to use one tool over another. Assessors were asked to identify all the ways in which the assessment tool/resource enhanced their decision-making process in regards to supporting learners. They were provided with six options including: “Providing an assessment of the learner/client’s Essential Skill level; Indicating the learner/client’s goal path; Planning intervention strategies (instruction/training); Identifying readiness for transition to the next step in the learner/client’s goal path; Using this tool did not enhance decision-making process compared to the tool/resource I would typically use; and Other”. 77% of the time Assessors said that using the tools enhanced their decision-making around determining the learner’s Essential Skills levels. 38% of Assessors said that the tool enhanced their planning of intervention strategies (instruction or training) and 29% of the time it enhanced their ability to identify a learner’s readiness to transition. The tools were least helpful in determining a client’s goal path. A learner’s skill level is only one of several factors that Assessors take into account when identifying a goal pathway. The skill level is informative but

not definitive. Only 10.5% of the time did Assessors state that the tools did not enhance their decision-making compared to what they typically use.

We wanted to know the factors that influenced an Assessor when it came to choosing an assessment tool/resource. Assessors were given a list of eight factors including an open-ended “Other” category for their comments. The results illustrated that many factors influenced their choice of assessment tool and no one single factor was a strong determinant. Ease of understanding the results (37%) and ease of use (34%) were the strongest factors closely followed by professional development received (29.5%), their perception of the learner’s Essential Skill levels (27%) and client’s stated goal path (26%). 28% of Assessors did say “Other” factors influenced them including the requirements of the pilot (being asked to try all the assessment tools/resources) and random choice. Interestingly, less than 25% of assessors said that familiarity with the tool, timing of the assessment, and the amount of time available to the assessor and learner were factors in choosing an appropriate tool. A concern about assessment tool vocabulary and understanding the results was strongly voiced by the Sudbury Francophone community. This result suggests further investigation to clarify whether the issue is about culturally sensitive translation of an assessment tool(s) or some other usage problem.

From the learner/client’s point of view, 73% said the testing helped them to know their Essential Skill levels. The tools that clients found most useful were CAMERA (London, Kitchener, Sudbury Francophone) and both OSP and TOWES (Sudbury Anglophone). CAMERA was top rated by learners in London, Sudbury Anglophone and Sudbury Francophone communities for knowing their Essential Skill levels while learners in Kitchener rated PDQ as the best tool for Essential Skill levels. The learners identified that the testing also helped them to decide on their next step (44%) and to set goals (39.5%). This is a positive endorsement of assessment as a supportive and informative process for learners/clients. The majority of clients (88%) agreed that the testing was a useful or somewhat useful process. When asked about how comfortable learners felt during assessment, 73% responded positively and a further 21% said it was somewhat comfortable. 45% of learners found the TOWES uncomfortable or somewhat comfortable. This result supports comments by some Assessors that the TOWES Assessment process takes too much time (3 meetings in total per learner) and assessment results take too long to return from the test centre, Bow Valley College. By pilot community, clients reported that CAMERA (Kitchener & Sudbury Anglophone), OSP (London) and PDQ (Sudbury Francophone) were most comfortable. While Assessors can’t completely reduce test or assessment anxiety, this shows that most learners can be made comfortable through the process. A notable exception to this positive trend was 11.5% of learners said that assessment was not helpful in any way with majority of these responses coming from Sudbury Francophone field-test community. There were many comments from Francophone learners about the tests being too hard and their lack of English skills being a factor in taking the English version of the assessment tools/resources. This results supports the Francophone Assessors comments in the previous paragraph concerning the vocabulary on the English assessments.

Each Assessor attempted to conduct a follow-up interview with each of their learners/clients after the twenty-four hours of intervention (participation in a program, service, placement or employment). Assessors were able to follow up 93% of the learners involved in the pilot. We asked Assessors to report on several aspects including: whether they had to conduct another

assessment; if the learner had transitioned to their next step; whether that was the right step; and if the assessment results provided to the next step (program, employer, etc.) were found to be useful and informative. Only 6.5% of learners had a second assessment. In most cases the second assessment was an in-house, non-pilot tool such a demonstration, but OSP was also used. When a reason was given for conducting a second assessment, it was mainly to measure progress. Most learners (65%) had not transitioned to their next step with the timelines of the pilot, but of the minority who did, 84% reported that the next step was appropriate and 7.5% said it was somewhat appropriate. When Assessors shared assessment results with the next step, 70% were told the information was useful (62%) or somewhat useful (8%). The OSP and CAMERA were noted as the tools used most when the results were shared and deemed useful by the next step. The overall positive reception to assessment results demonstrates that the results are in a format that can communicate to a variety of next step stakeholders. A notable and curious exception to this was the 8%, which responded that the next step stated that the assessment results were “not useful”. The comments section for this question revealed that instructors at other training programs did not want the assessment results to influence how they worked with the client and their expectations of the client.

Once the field test assessments were completed, we conducted an evaluation with Assessor’s to gather their reflections and best practice suggestions. We asked them about the role of professional development and training on each tool/resource, about future use of the tools, supports needed to increase their capacity to use the tools/resources, and the increases, if any, in their personal knowledge and capacity to use the tools. We also asked them to rate the ability of the various tools to assess for the variety of pathways. As well, we solicited their comments on the future purchasing of tools and the factors influencing those purchases. Lastly, we invited their comments on the various aspects of communication amongst project participants (agencies, leads, fellow Assessors).

Overall Assessors felt supported and informed during the project. 89% of Assessors either agreed or strongly agreed that they had access to relevant, quality training and support during the project. When asked about their knowledge and capacity to use the assessment tools, 91.9% agreed or strongly agreed that it had increased as a result of participating the project. Training and professional development on the tools was the main factor for increasing capacity of Assessors; in fact 84.2% felt training increased their overall understanding to use the tools effectively during the project. *“Become very knowledgeable about the assessment tools before administering them.”* (Assessor comment) Assessors sought out various informal supports including support from local community leads (76.9%), support from other Assessors in their region (61.5%) and regular networking with others involved in the project (53.8%). When asked if the informal supports increased their capacity to use the assessment tools and resources effectively, 92.3% either agreed or strongly agreed. This finding emphasizes the importance of peer support and guidance in developing professional practice in assessment. *“Take training on the tools and perhaps set up some sort of mentoring system for future use.”*(best practice suggestion by an Assessor)

A very important question for this project was to identify which tools were best suited for assessing a learner’s readiness to transition to specific goal pathways, namely employment, further education and training (e.g. foundational skills (LBS), academic upgrading/adult credit,

employment readiness training and post-secondary including apprenticeship) and independence. Before addressing this question and to establish a foundation of comparability, we asked all the Assessors to rate whether the tools were able to assess a learner/client's Essential Skill levels. All the tools were rated as being able to do this with some positive ratings for the following tools, PDQ, TOWES G2, CAMERA. Both OSP and CAMERA received split ratings indicating more need for investigation. 18.2% of Assessors disagreed that CAMERA could assess ES levels and 20% of Assessors disagreed with the OSP. As mentioned before, OSP was designed as an intake interview more than a diagnostic tool and it relies on self-report by learners. CAMERA has not yet been articulated to the Essential Skills; this would be a very helpful development for this positively valued tool. Only 36% of the learners assessed had employment as a goal and of those, CAMERA was the tool most used. When asked to rate the capability of each tool to demonstrate readiness for transition to employment, 73% of Assessors either agreed or strongly agreed that CAMERA was able to do so. 72% of Assessors agreed or strongly agreed that the TOWES was capable and 63% of Assessors agreed or strongly agreed that the PDQ was capable. 63% of Assessors agreed or somewhat agreed that the OSP Check In was capable.

In looking at the further education and training pathway, we requested ratings of tools for the following transitions, foundational training (language and/or literacy programs), employment-readiness training, adult credit, post-secondary including apprenticeship and other education and training programs. During the project, 58.5% of learners had further education and training as their goal pathway. In examining readiness to transition to foundational training, CAMERA was most highly rated. Keeping in mind only 2% of learners identified foundational training as part of their goal, 91% of Assessors either strongly agreed or agreed that CAMERA was capable. 68.2% of Assessors agreed or strongly agreed that PDQ was capable, 55.6% of Assessors gave the same rating to TOWES and 40% of Assessors gave the same rating to the OSP Check In. Many times, learners engage in employment-readiness training after or during academic upgrading and before employment. For this transition, the tools were rated in the following order for their capability, TOWES G2, CAMERA, PDQ and OSP Check In. In looking at a client's readiness to move on to some other employment and training program in the community, Assessors favoured the TOWES and PDQ.

Approximately one half of the 58.5% of learners in the further education and training pathway were specifically interested in adult credit. None of the tools were proven particularly capable of assessing a client's readiness to transition to adult credit. In rating PDQ, 36.4% of Assessors strongly agreed or agreed that it could assess for adult credit. 38.9% of Assessors strongly agreed or agreed that the TOWES G2 paper-based could do the job. While 45.5% of Assessors strongly agreed or agreed that the CAMERA was capable of assessing for adult credit but 22.7% of Assessors disagreed. The OSP Check In had a split between strongly agreed/agreed (30%) and disagreed (43.3%). In examining the post-secondary transition, TOWES G2 and PDQ received positive praise with 66.7% of Assessors either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the first tool was capable and 45.5% of Assessors agreeing or strongly agreeing to the second tool. In contrast, 43.3% and 27% of Assessors disagreed that the OSP and CAMERA, respectively, were capable of assessing for readiness to transition to post-secondary.

A related question to the issue of readiness to transition was the ability of each tool to demonstrate learner skills attainment (progress). We did ask Assessors to rate each tool on this

basis, but the results are inconclusive and beg further investigation. While most of the tools were rated as being able to measure progress (TOWES G2, CAMERA, PDQ) the results were polarized with a minority of Assessors disagreeing about a tool's ability to measure progress. This is due in part to the fact that there were indications that the Assessors were confused about the wording "timing of assessment". Most Assessors stated that they were conducting an ongoing progress assessment. Ideally, at least two assessments using the same tool would be conducted on a learner to compare gains in each skill domain. As well, the learner would be assessed using a second tool to contrast the results from each tool.

'Ease of use' turned out to be the strongest factor (82.4%) influencing recommendations for the future purchase of assessment tools/resources while 'Cost of tool' was a minor (41.2%) factor. Second strongest factor was 'Tool's ability to assess Essential Skill proficiency' followed by both 'Tool's ability to assess readiness for transition to employment' and "Tool's ability to assess readiness for transition to employment-readiness training program'. Other influential factors were 'Tool's ability to assess skill attainment (progress)', 'Readiness to transition to post-secondary (including apprenticeship) programs', and "Readiness for transition to foundational training (language and/or literacy programs)'. These results will be influenced by the fact that most Assessors came from the LBS sector, which has three key goal pathways, employment, further education and training, and independence. "*Know the goal of the learner to help direct which tool to use.*" (Assessor best practice suggestion)

Integral to in any successful assessment and transition is communication among local agencies and educators. The project took a look at whether the field tests encouraged increased communication and enhanced networking within the communities. When it came to communication amongst local adult education, training and employment agencies, almost half (48.6%) of Assessors agreed or strongly agreed that it had increased as a result of the project and another 35.1% somewhat agreed. The majority of Assessors (86.4%) reported that local leads and project administrators provided adequate support and resources for participating in the project. 75% of Assessors rated the assessment evaluation process as clear, manageable and user-friendly. All these efforts of support and communication enabled the Assessors to focus implementing the tools with learners/clients and documenting the results.

Further to the issue of communication was overall project communication and process. A separate evaluation tool was used to gather opinion and feedback from the project partners. . Based on their participation in the project, all partners agreed or strongly agreed that their knowledge and awareness of assessment tools and resources had increased. Overall, the partners felt that the project was successful at meeting the project deliverables with positive results in organizing the assessment field tests (85.8% very successful or successful), training and support (85.7%), project communication (80%) and administration (paper work and reporting) (75%). Partners agreed that the reporting processes were clear, manageable and user-friendly and that adequate resources and support were provided to meet the requirements of their roles. Adequate resources and time are important keys to any successful initiative in which wide spread agreement and compliance to new procedures and tools, such as assessment tools, is the goal.

Outcomes and Recommendations

The adult education and training field in Ontario is diverse and has many players with as many funding bodies. Ranging from employment training and preparation to literacy, academic upgrading, and preparation for post-secondary education and apprenticeships, the system is in place to address the diverse needs, goals and pathways of adults who seek to improve their knowledge, skills and lives. This project set out to move forward the practice and communication among the various stakeholders and players in the adult education field. It sought to use the domains and levels of Essential Skills as a common language amongst educators to facilitate communication about learners/clients' goals and progress. Without communication, the system stumbles and fails to effectively support learners along their pathways. Part of that communication is having tools to document and share information about learner progress and skill attainment. This project focused on four such tools/resources: CAMERA (Communications And Math Employment Readiness Assessment) Placement and Diagnostic tools, TOWES G2 (Test of Workplace Essential Skills) both paper-based and online, PDQ (Prose/Document/Quantitative) online assessment tool, and Ontario Skills Passport Check In.

By the end of the project, we hoped to accomplish the following outcomes:

- Greater understanding of existing assessment tools and practices being utilized in Canada and other countries for entry and exit purposes
- Enhanced communication among key stakeholders involved in the Learner Skill Attainment Initiative
- Enhanced communication at the local level among the providers of employment, adult credit, postsecondary, apprenticeship and foundational training for adults
- Recommendations for best practices and tools for assessment in order to improve the capacity of school boards, colleges and community-based agencies in placing adults in the right program
- Deeper understanding amongst frontline staff in adult credit and non-credit, adult education settings regarding the effectiveness of specific tools
- Informed understanding enabling the forward movement of adult education policy development

What did we accomplish on our outcomes?

- ◆ Assessors strongly agreed or agreed (92%) that their knowledge and capacity to use the assessment tools and resources had increased as a result of participating in the project.
- ◆ All the project partners/stakeholders strongly agreed or agreed that their knowledge had also increased especially in regard to Essential Skills, Assessment practices and Learner Skill Attainment. A Project READ representative exchanged information about the Common Assessment Pilot with the agencies in the Learner Skill Attainment Initiative.
- ◆ Local networking was enhanced with 65% of Assessors either agreeing or somewhat agreeing that communication among and knowledge about programs in adult education and employment agencies increased as a result of the project.
- ◆ Through Assessors comments and ratings of the tools for specific pathways and transitions, we have identified some important trends in the appropriate use of assessment tools. Assessor

comments: *“All the tools have different strengths and weaknesses.” “Take training on the tools and perhaps set up some sort of mentoring system for future use.” “Keep in mind that one size does not fit all. It is necessary to carefully choose which assessment to use.” “Choose an assessment tool that best compliments the learner’s goal.”* Recommendations based on evaluation results:

- OSP Check in and CAMERA placement tools were recommended the most for ease of use and ease of understanding results
 - CAMERA placement tool was recommended to assess learner’s readiness for transition to foundational (literacy) training
 - TOWES G2 paper-based tool was recommended for being able to assess Essential Skill levels (though all tools were useful for this)
 - CAMERA placement tool was recommended as useful for learners to know their Essential Skills levels
 - CAMERA placement tool was recommended for providing a comfortable process for learners
- ◆ A wide range of assessors and agencies in a variety of sectors participated in the four field test communities including Literacy & Basic Skills (LBS), Academic Upgrading (AU), Adult Credit, Job Connect, Employment Assistance Services (EAS), English as a Second Language and Ontario Works. There was also participation by three cultural streams Native, Francophone, and Deaf/Hard of Hearing. The majority of Assessors came from LBS/AU sector with the next highest from EAS, then Job Connect and finally Adult Credit. Workplaces were the only sector not participating. Assessors agreed that the project deepened their understanding of the effectiveness of specific assessment tools. 77% of the time Assessors said that using the tools enhanced their decision-making around determining a learner’s Essential Skill levels. 38% of Assessors said that the tools enhanced their decision-making around planning intervention strategies (instruction, programming or placements) as well as their decisions around readiness for transition (29%). The tools were least helpful in determining a client’s goal path (only helping 17% of the time). There are many factors that go into determining a learner’s pathway including learner’s choice, current skill levels, long-term and short-term objectives/needs, and current employment/income status, among others.
- ◆ This project is a snap shot of assessment practices for the four tools. It is the beginning of an investigation into common assessment and building communication among the players in adult education and training, which can move the field forward in meeting the needs of adults in Ontario. It does provide detailed information of the experience of 42 Assessors in 41 Agencies conducting 754 assessments over a period of approximately four months. While the project is not exhaustive, it does provide comprehensive data to build further projects and initiatives upon. It also provides indicators as to the most appropriate use of the tools for learners in the three key pathways – employment, further education and training, and independence. It is a basis for moving forward and beginning the development of common assessment practice and policy across the adult education sector.

Deliverables:

The project proposed the following deliverables:

1. Establishment of local community networks
2. A representative to participate on the provincial pilot project advisory group (Learner Skill Attainment Initiative)
3. A literature review of recent Canadian and world research on assessment practices for adult learners
4. Results from field-testing (600 assessments conducted amongst the three communities) the capability of assessment tools and approaches (entry and exit assessments) based on the Essential Skills to demonstrate learner skill attainment and readiness for transition to learner destinations including employment, adult credit programs, postsecondary education and foundations for learning. The four assessment tools/resources are: CAMERA (Communications and Math Employment Readiness Assessment), TOWES (Test of Workplace Essential Skills), OSP Essential Skills & Work Habits Check In and PDQ (Prose/Document/Quantitative Profile)
5. Best practices of using the assessment tools to improve the capacity of school board, colleges and community-based agencies in placing adult learners in the right program
6. An Interim Project Report and a Final Project Report including recommendations for the development of adult education policy framework

What did we accomplish?

1. Local community networks – As mentioned above, 65% of Assessors felt that communication among adult educators and trainers increased in their local communities as a result of this project. This result was echoed by the community leads. “Groups liked the idea of a common language (Essential Skills) and saw this [project] as an exhaustive, tiring, but positive step into working together with other adult educators and employment training staff.” (Kitchener Community Report) Each community held local meetings providing opportunities to build relationships, enhance communication and provide peer support. One community commented that this project clarified what exactly is meant by Literacy and Essential Skills to employment agencies. It took the agencies beyond a superficial understanding of LBS programs as places to upgrade reading and writing.
2. Communication with the Learner Skill Attainment (LSA) Initiative – Project READ kept in regular contact with the agencies involved in the LSA Initiative via email (through the LSA lead contact), written project updates and a meeting in Toronto.
3. Literature Review of Assessment Practices – This document was completed and submitted to the lead project representatives from Ministry of Education and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The information gained through the review reinforced the results of this project. “Just as no single teaching strategy is effective for all learners in all situations, no single assessment instrument of process is adequate in providing quality information for all purposes.” (M. Taylor, p.34 of the Literature Review) We found that most jurisdictions are using a range of assessment tools for the variety of learners and settings. (For more information, please refer to the Review in the Appendices.)

4. Results from the field-testing of the four Assessment Tools/Resources – We targeted 600 assessment and achieved 754 across the four communities – Kitchener (268), London (275), Sudbury Anglophone (27) and Sudbury Francophone (184). All of the tools were used with a variety of learners/clients. Within this deliverable there were key questions or evaluation deliverables related to the capability and use of each assessment tool/resource.
 - a. The capability of each assessment tool to demonstrate Essential Skills proficiency – All the pilot tools were used to assess the four main domains of Essential Skills (Reading Text, Document Use, Numeracy and Writing) and all were successful in begin able to do this. The majority of Assessors felt that all the tools enhanced their ability to determine ES levels. The majority of learners said all the tools were helpful in them knowing their ES levels. PDQ, CAMERA and TOWES G2 were favoured for ES level identification.
 - b. The capability of each assessment tool to demonstrate readiness for transition to employment – Most assessors said that TOWES and CAMERA were the most able to demonstrate readiness for transition to employment. It is important to note that only 36% of learners in the pilot had employment as a goal and very few made that transition during the project.
 - c. The capability of each tool to demonstrate readiness for transition to adult credit and/or further employment training programs – While most learners being assessed had further education and training as a goal and half of those were specifically interested in adult credit, none of the tools were particularly able to demonstrate readiness for adult credit. However, Assessors did say that most of the tools were able to identify readiness for transition to other foundational or employment training programs. CAMERA was best for this purpose.
 - d. The capability of each tool to demonstrate readiness for transition to post-secondary including apprenticeship – Though most learners (58.5%) assessed had further education and training as a goal, a small minority identified post-secondary including apprenticeship as a goal. Assessors were not overwhelmingly convinced that any of the tools were able to demonstrate this type of readiness but without many clients in this target group, it is difficult to make substantial conclusions. TOWES and PDQ were cited the most by Assessors for this type of transition.
 - e. The capability of each assessment tool to demonstrate learner skill attainment or progress – Results for this are inconclusive. Most Assessors said they used the tools at a time for measuring ongoing progress, but overall not a significant number of Assessors said that any of the tools were useful for this purpose. Ideally, the same tool needs to be administered with a learner over a long period of time (initial, ongoing and exit) in order to compare assessment results that would indicate progress or skills attainment. The timeline for this project did not allow that and the focus on the project was how well the tools informed readiness to transition. Further investigation into the issue of measuring progress is recommended.
 - f. Determine if the administration of each assessment tool follows fair assessment practices – All tools reflected fair assessment practices based on the experience of

Assessors using the tools, the ease of use of the tools, usefulness of the results, and learner comfort level.

- g. Identify the training, professional development and support required to build Assessor capacity – Training, professional development and support in learning each of the tools had a significant impact on building Assessor capacity. All Assessors said that training considerably increased their capacity and understanding of the tools. The vast majority said that the training was relevant and high quality.
 - h. Determine if there can be a consistent approach to assessing Essential Skills across a variety of adult education, training and employment program settings through the use of common assessment tools and resources – The four main tools can be used in a variety of program settings to assess current Essential Skill levels. Being able to assess current ES levels was of high value to both Assessors and learners/clients. Each tool, regardless of the setting and client group, showed consistent ability to assess. There was some variation in the frequency of tool use amongst settings and age groups, etc. and in turn which tools were then deemed to be effective, the difference was very insignificant.
5. Best Practices – Based on comments provided by both the Assessors and the Community Leads, we have a wealth of “reflections on practice” from this project. A future step would be to implement these reflections to confirm that they are valid and tested best practices. Each community was asked to include, in their local reports, a list of pros and cons for each tool based on their field-test experience. This information also provides a great deal of insight into the effectiveness, appropriate use, and benefits of each tool/resource. “The assessors felt they gained very valuable experience through this project. [Learners] found the assessments interesting and informative and appreciated the results.” (London Community Report) The following are some of the key best practice recommendations:
- a. Assessors must have experience, knowledge and skills in conducting academic assessments.
 - b. Assessors must have in-depth knowledge of Essential Skills levels and the 500-point scale.
 - c. Assessors must have access to training and support to learn a new assessment tool/resource.
 - d. Peer mentoring and pilot testing should accompany initial training for the implementation of any new assessment tool/resource.
6. Interim and Final Project Reports – An Interim Project report was submitted to the funders in February 2008, approximately five months after the start of the project (October 2007). The Final Report was completed in July 2008 and submitted to Ministry of Education and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Recommendations

It is important to preface the following recommendations with a reiteration that this project was only the first step in examining the key issues of learner skill attainment, readiness for transition, and the use of Essential Skills as a common language throughout the fields of adult education and training and employment. The project has solicited some insights into those issues but further, long-term study and research is merited. There is clarity from the results of this project regarding some helpful changes to current assessment practices in the field.

1. Encourage **access to and use of the four field-tested assessment tools** (TOWES G2, CAMERA, PDQ and OSP Check In) by all adult education and training agencies in Ontario. Encourage employment training and preparation agencies to directly access OSP Check In and to engage with educational agencies to access TOWES, CAMERA and PDQ assessments for their clients. Each of the tools has different strengths, uses and benefits for learners/clients, assessors and agencies. As outlined in the Results, Findings and Outcomes sections, each tool is appropriate for specific goal pathways and transitions. As well, many of the tools require a great deal of assessor knowledge in the area of educational and academic assessments for proper test administration and interpretation of the results.
2. Provide **funding and professional development to secure access to and use of the tools**. Time and time again, each community and all assessors emphasized the absolute importance of training, professional development and ongoing support from peers with tool expertise in order to learn how to use each of the assessment tools and to interpret the results. All the tools are based on the federal Essential Skills (ES), therefore training in ES is a vital foundation. Most of the tools have an associated cost for the tests themselves (ranging from \$9 to \$65 per test) and/or for the training on the tool. Funding of those costs will determine wide spread access to the tools.
3. Ensure that all assessors, educators and trainers have a **thorough and in-depth knowledge of HRSDC's 9 Essential Skills and the 500-point scale**. Since all the tools use ES as their common language for assigning a domain and level, it is vital that all assessors fully understand the complexity levels and the domains. A cursory awareness of Essential Skills is not sufficient for the interpretation of assessment results. Assessors are not only responsible for presenting the assessment results to learners/clients, but explaining the significance and benefits of an individual's skill levels and how it impacts on their goal pathway and possible interventions (programs, services, training, placements, etc). If we are to act as an integrated system of delivery agencies then a common language is integral to inter-agency communication, sharing of learner information, and program development.
4. Ensure that these tools are part of a **tool-kit approach** to assessment. A tool kit contains a variety of tools providing many options from which to choose. Assessors confirmed that having tool options for a variety of learners/clients in a range of settings is important. As one assessor said, "one size does not fit all". One assessment tool cannot fulfill all the needs. As assessors broaden their knowledge of various tools and increase their depth of assessment skills, it directly benefits the learner resulting in more effective assessments and guidance. It is important to note that identification of skill levels is only one of many factors that assessors take into account when deciding upon a goal pathway or readiness to transition to the next step. Learner choice, labour market statistics, requirements of the next step and many other factors influence goal pathways and transitions. Further investigation into the range of influencing factors would be helpful.

5. Continue **investigation and research** into three areas: 1) the capability of assessment tools to demonstrate learner skill attainment or progress; 2) effective Francophone assessment tools (both French and English language tools appropriate for Francophone students); and 3) assessment tools that would specifically demonstrate readiness to transition to Adult credit. In each of these areas, we had inconclusive or negative results suggesting further investigation was merited.

Thank you for the investment into this exploration of assessment tools and practices. This project provided an excellent opportunity for the four communities to build expertise in assessment tools and practices as well as expanding and enriching relationships amongst adult education, training and employment agencies. Overall, agencies, assessors and learners rated it as a positive and informative, growth experience. We would encourage the government to provide this opportunity to more communities as part of a larger adult education development initiative. A comprehensive roll out of these tools could make a significant positive impact upon the agencies serving the education and training needs of adults in Ontario. It would contribute to the utilization of a common language, in this case Essential Skills, throughout the system thus supporting the seamless transition of adults between steps (agencies, programs, placements). As we look to the future and the prediction by the Canadian Council on Learning* that Ontario will have 42% more adults in Essential Skills levels 1 and 2, educators and trainers need to be adequately prepared, professional trained, and realistically resourced to address the growing demand for training.

**Reading the Future: Planning to Meet Canada's Future Literacy Needs*, June 2008, Canadian Council on Learning, www.ccl-cca.ca

