

So – What’s In It For Me?

The **Teacher of Adults: Literacy Educator (ALE) Certificate Program** offers you, as an adult literacy educator, an exciting opportunity to not only gain skills and knowledge, but to also share your experiences with other course participants. The courses (or modules) of the Certificate are built on the principles of adult education. You bring your past knowledge and experience to the current learning situation. You use that as a base upon which to build new knowledge. As an adult learner, you are a willing participant in the learning environment. The information is relevant to your daily work and life.

Why Should I Take Any of the Courses?

That’s a good question. There are many benefits.

- Recognition of your current practice and skills
- Opportunity to confirm and demonstrate what you already know
- Meeting literacy practitioners from other communities
- Sharing of your accumulated knowledge and experiences
- Sharing of ideas and dilemmas – problem solving
- Building your “tool kit” of strategies and approaches
- Expanding your understanding of literacy instruction and methods
- Practical information and tools that can be immediately applied to your work

Each of the courses in the Program closely examines some aspect of the work that adult literacy educators do—from looking at the challenges and barriers that face adult literacy learners (*The Adult Literacy Learner*) to looking at specific strategies for literacy and numeracy instruction (*Applied Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy Instruction*). The courses address the range of literacy models and delivery agencies from one-to-one tutoring at a community-based program and classes in community college to groups of employees learning in the workplace. As well, all goal pathways are explored including literacy for independence, literacy to prepare for further education or training and literacy for employment outcomes.

You can take the whole program (7 courses for the certificate) or an individual course based on your current professional development needs.

We always tell adult literacy learners that **it’s never too late to improve** their literacy skills. That same philosophy can be applied to ALE. While you may have worked in the field for a long time, we’re sure that you’ll find something new to learn in each course. But it goes beyond that! If you have many years experience, you have a wealth of information and practical experience that you can **share** with educators who are less experienced. This means that the courses are as much about what you put into them, as it is about what you take with you. All the courses were refreshed and

revised between 2002 and 2007. They are based on current adult education and literacy acquisition theories along with practical insights and tools.

Seven courses (or modules) make up the Certificate Program:

- The Adult Literacy Learner
- Assessing & Evaluating Literacy Learning
- Planning For Literacy Learning
- Foundational Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy Instruction
- Applied Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy Instruction
- Fieldwork Placement Module
- Choice of Electives:
 - Professional Pathways in Adult Literacy
 - Making it Work: Workplace Basics for Adult Educators
 - Planning Programs for Employment Outcomes
 - Learning Disabilities and Adult Literacy

To receive the Teacher of Adults: Literacy Educator Certificate, you will need to complete the five (5) core courses, one (1) elective and the Fieldwork Placement. To learn more about each of the courses go to www.nald.ca/literacyeducator/ and click on each of the course titles.

What Does Taking a Course Involve?

The Certificate Program has been designed for delivery via **distance education with self-directed course manuals (texts) and online interaction** (e.g. discussion board or website) to supplement the learning. The distance education mode of delivery may vary at each College delivering the program. Some colleges may even offer face-to-face delivery from time to time. Check the college calendar for the most current information.

For the most part, courses are offered through “*OntarioLearn*”, an online platform for the consortium of colleges in Ontario offering online learning. Courses delivered through *OntarioLearn* are accessible from anywhere with an Internet connection (in Ontario, Canada or around the world). What you need to keep in mind is that the courses are “asynchronous”. That means the online information and comments/questions from your instructor and your peers can be accessed at any time. **You don’t have to log in at a specific time each week.** It is there when you want it. This should help you fit learning into your busy schedule.

The first step is to register for an ALE course through one of the colleges offering the program – Algonquin, Sault and Conestoga. Most colleges accept registrations online, via fax and in person. You can link to the colleges from the ALE website – www.nald.ca/literacyeducator

Time Commitment

Each course has been allocated 48 credit hours and has been structured to fit a term or semester. If the term/semester is 12 weeks, this means that you will need to dedicate 4 hours a week towards reading the course study guide, participating in the online discussion, completing the required learning activities and completing the course demonstration (final assignment). From experience, we know that the **average ALE student devotes 2 – 4 hours per week** to course work with more hours required in the weeks leading up to an assignment deadline.

Your Responsibilities

You need to verify with the instructor or facilitator exactly what your specific responsibilities will be to ensure that you can successfully complete all the course requirements. In general, you must do the following to complete each course successfully:

- ▶ Read all the materials in the course study guide (see sample pages)
- ▶ Participate in the online discussions
- ▶ Complete and submit the unit assignments and learning activities required for each course (please refer to the sample pages to see some examples of learning activities)
- ▶ Complete a Module Demonstration (final course assignment) that will allow you to show that you have met or achieved the course outcome (see sample pages).

There are **no final examinations** for any of the courses. All the work that you submit during the course will be evaluated. The marks you achieve for each submission will be averaged into your final course mark. Your active participation in the online component (discussions and activities) will also count towards your final course mark.

We've attached some sample pages that should help you decide – **“Yes! This is for me!”**

SAMPLE PAGES

Here is a short selection of text from Unit Three of the course *Foundational Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy Instruction*:

UNIT 3.1 COUNSELLING IN THE LITERACY SETTING

This section of the unit is designed to help you recognize situations in the literacy setting where a learner requires support through counselling.

AS we explore counselling within the literacy setting, you'll notice similarities and differences between the role of the counsellor and the role of the educator. The desired outcome, in both cases, involves change—the individual gaining the knowledge, skills, abilities and awareness that allow the person to enact change in his or her life in ways that are meaningful to that person.

The main difference is that the adult literacy educator's foremost focus is the learner acquiring or improving literacy levels in order to enact this change. The use of counselling techniques within the literacy session by the adult literacy educator supports this "literacy-centered" focus. Counselling techniques are used in the pursuit of helping the adult reach his or her goals. While the literacy educator's role may be to support the learner in developing skills in problem-solving, a line is crossed when the educator attempts to take ownership of the problem and the solution.

In fact, doing too much for the learner can be worse than doing nothing at all. This is because it can be seen as a way in which the educator maintains authority over the learner. If this happens the learner can be prevented from developing problem-solving skills and, more importantly, prevented from developing the self-confidence and self-awareness that results from dealing with issues independently. In the long run, these skills will last beyond the adult's time in the literacy program.

"Two of the most common issues for which students access counselling services in the Student Services Office are anxiety and depression."
 ~ Conestoga College
 Counselling Web Page
*Recognizing Signs
 of Anxiety*

SELF-REFLECTION

Take a few moments to reflect on your personal opinion about counselling:

- Do you think people should be able to solve their own problems without turning to someone else?
 - Do you believe counselling is only for those who have serious issues with depression or anxiety?
 - Do you believe that counselling is okay for other people, but it's nothing you would ever do or need?
 - How might your personal opinion about counselling get in the way of providing information to the adult learners you work with?
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When the learner requires counselling beyond this focus—when the personal issue itself becomes the main focus of the learning session, or when the learner requires professional help with his or her personal problem—then the adult literacy educator must recognize his or her limitations, both in terms of the educator's role and in terms of training. In these cases, a professional counsellor and counselling sessions outside the literacy session are the best approach.

WHAT IS COUNSELLING?

The term counselling is widely used these days. Depending on your personal situation, you might turn for help to employment counsellors, school counsellors, substance abuse counsellors, and so on. In traditional communities, people who are experiencing difficulty turn to elders for counsel and guidance.

Counselling relationships also take many different forms. For example, a psychotherapist may counsel a patient for a number of years, while an employment counsellor may see a client only once. Most counselling relationships fall between these two extremes.

Counselling as a process has a beginning, a middle and an end. From the first contact the counselling relationship is set up with an eye to bringing closure to the issues that are being discussed. In *Teaching Psychological Skills: Models for Giving Psychology Away*, Larsen (1984) outlines three assumptions ...

SAMPLE LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

The learning activities for each unit of a course study guide use a range of approaches to help you gain the skills and knowledge you need to be the best literacy educator you can be.

Three different types of learning activities are provided in each unit. The first type of learning activity uses comments or questions that should stimulate discussion of the topic at hand. The second type of learning activity uses self-reflection or observation to help you critically think about what you do as an educator. The final type of activity usually requires you to complete or participate in a specific activity. You might, for example, be required to rewrite a short document using plain language.

Here are sample discussion questions from the elective course *Professional Pathways in Adult Literacy*:

Unit Three Discussion Questions

Description

The questions are designed for you to gain new insights into the unit content through peer interaction. **Your instructor may choose from the suggested questions or provide others for discussion.**

1. Read the case studies at the beginning of the unit. How can you help the organization providing a workshop or training session to ensure that both the topic and the result are beneficial to you?
2. What steps can you take to apply what you learn in this course to the setting where you volunteer or work as an adult literacy educator?
3. Outline a time when you were faced with making an ethical decision. How did you make the decision? What were the consequences of your response? What, if anything, would you do differently if faced with the same situation?
4. Do you think you have what it takes to be a mentor? How would you go about offering your skills to someone?
5. John Norton says that ultimately you are the engine that drives your Professional Development. How would you describe your commitment to critical self-reflection and self-improvement? In addition to this course, what other types of Professional Development (formal or informal) have you participated in the past 12 months?

Here are two activities from the course *The Adult Literacy Learner*:

UNIT ONE JOURNAL ENTRY

Description

Reflect upon a personal learning experience that was a positive one for you. Write down your thoughts and ideas to create a learning journal for this course. In this journal entry, discuss the following questions:

1. What was the learning experience?
2. What feeling do you associate with it?
3. What were your reasons for involvement?
4. Why was the experience positive for you?
5. How might your experience help you as an adult literacy educator?

UNIT THREE ASSIGNMENT

Description

This learning activity is designed to provide you with the opportunity to reflect upon, and then integrate and apply, some of the key points and concepts that have been discussed in this unit. Think of the learning activity as a chance to practice!

Your Tasks

Eileen M. Antone writes in the supplementary reading selection, *Aboriginal Peoples: Literacy and Learning*: "Effective and successful programs and practices are those that learners perceive to be directly relevant to their own environments and cultural traditions. Consequently, effective and successful programs are those in which learners are motivated to participate."

1. Briefly describe an environment* or cultural tradition in which an adult literacy learner may be situated.
2. Outline five ways you might ensure the literacy program is directly relevant to the learner's own environment or cultural traditions so that he or she is motivated to participate.

* Environment might refer to a group of learners who share common needs and concerns, for example, women or youth. It might also refer to individuals who participate in a specific type of literacy program, such as rural literacy, family literacy, or workplace literacy. It might also refer to a person who has special needs, for example, physical challenges.

COURSE (MODULE) DEMONSTRATION

There is no final examination for any of the courses. Instead, you will also be required to complete a demonstration activity. While the unit activities are designed to provide you with the opportunity to reflect upon, integrate and apply the key points and concepts that have been discussed in a specific unit, the module demonstration is the method by which you will show that you have met the overall module outcome—in other words, that you have learned what you set out to learn as a participant in this course.

The demonstration is the evidence of your learning. It is a way for you to synthesize and integrate the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout the course. The demonstration is your opportunity to show or demonstrate that you can apply what you've learned to a literacy setting.

Here is the demonstration activity from the course *Assessing and Evaluating Literacy Learning*:

The outcome for this course states: Upon successful completion of this course, participants should be able to use a learner-centred approach to assess and evaluate the skills and knowledge of individual learners to help learners achieve their goals.

Before you begin the activity, read the demonstration description carefully to ensure you understand all that is required for you to successfully complete the activity.

1. Read the Supplementary Reading selection (*Gary Willis, A Case Study*).
2. Based on the information in the case study, write a Training Plan that reflects Gary's skills and his interests/needs at entry into the program. Use the Training Plan provided at the back of this section or another one of your choice.
3. Conduct an informal ongoing assessment by selecting four examples from the case study that you believe demonstrate that Gary is making progress (one page).
4. Create a demonstration activity for Gary and explain why you think it is suitable (two pages).
5. Describe, in a brief statement, how you and Gary would know he is ready to exit or leave the literacy program (one page).

Don't forget – if you want more information
about any of the courses go to:

<http://www.nald.ca/literacyeducator/>