

March 2010



***Deaf Literacy
Initiative***



Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum
Report on Development of
Adapted *Signposts* Curriculum Guidelines





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Acknowledgements

Deaf Literacy Initiative gratefully acknowledges PTP and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MCTU), without their support this research would not have been possible.

DLI would also like to thank those working in the Deaf literacy community for their contribution through interviews, and feedback. It is because of you we were able to keep the research moving forward.

We specifically would like to thank participants of expert advisory committee and our consultants from PTP:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Aleksandra Popovic | Consultant, PTP Adult Learning and Employment Program |
| Karen Geraci | Consultant, Inquire Consulting for PTP |
| Marissa Mazzulla | Consultant, Inquire Consulting for PTP |
| Patrick Cross | Mohawk College – Deaf Empowerment Program |
| Patrizio Presenza | CHS Toronto – Deaf Workforce Literacy |
| Janet Morden | District School Board of Niagara – Niagara Adult Literacy for the Deaf |

Adaption of Signposts Curriculum Guidelines:

Prepared by Deaf Literacy Initiative

March 25, 2010

Introduction:

Deaf Literacy Initiative and Pathway to Possibilities (PTP) Adult Learning and Employment Programs were engaged in the process of examining PTP's *Signposts* for use in Deaf literacy classrooms. In its present form, *Signposts* was complete and currently used by Anglophone literacy practitioners in Ontario. Deaf Literacy Initiative was interested in an adaptation for the Deaf literacy stream to ensure that it can be used to full advantage in guiding decisions about programming for Deaf learners.

PTP recommended Deaf Literacy Initiative to produce a Deaf stream appropriate curriculum guidelines utilizing the original research, concept and purpose behind PTP's *Signposts* curriculum guidelines. The curriculum guidelines will not only be adapted but also re-conceptualized in some parts of the guidelines and Deaf literacy professionals will develop those parts. The new curriculum guidelines will be considered as property of Deaf Literacy Initiative, and in its preface, we will acknowledge PTP's *Signposts* as the point of departure for its development. PTP was confident that Deaf Literacy Initiative has the necessary knowledge and expertise to carry out this work.

Considering the input, PTP has ascertained that in order to make *Signposts* appropriate for Deaf literacy programming, it should undergo an adaptation. This will allow DLI to use *Signposts* as the foundation for developing a Deaf literacy curriculum guideline resource without the limitations an adaptation might impose.

Adapting and re-conceptualizing would allow DLI to lead the development process. DLI carried out the analysis and developed the content. PTP recognized that DLI was in the position to do this work because DLI has both the knowledge of Deaf Literacy needed and the expertise to develop valuable products for the stream. The resulting documents will be the sole property of DLI. PTP was only asked that DLI acknowledge that the original research, concept and purpose came from PTP's *Signposts*.

Adaptations of Signposts Curriculum Guidelines:

Deaf Literacy Initiative and PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs are working together to adapt *Signposts* for use in deaf literacy classrooms.

Signposts were originally created by PTP and are currently used in the Anglophone literacy programs in Ontario. It is designed to help instructors decide what to teach literacy learners developing the skills they need to go directly to work. *Signposts* is used alongside other resources. For example, *DEAF CAN!* by Durham Deaf Services would be used alongside *Signposts* to give learners practice developing the skills described in *Signposts*.

Although *Signposts* is published in one book, in reality it contains three components:

1. **Signpost statements:** These describe how workers use reading, document use, writing and numeracy skills in jobs that LBS learners typically access. Over 800 Essential Skills Profile examples were synthesized to develop the 44 statements.
2. **Instructional ideas:** These provide specific suggestions to help instructors choose activities to teach learners literacy skills for work. There were instructional ideas for each *Signposts* statement.
3. **Sample assessment activities:** These informal assessment activities were designed for instructors to use in the classroom to monitor skill development. Many of the *Signposts* statements include these.

What was adapted?

Each of the three *Signposts* components needed to be adapted to make them suitable for use in deaf literacy classes. We started by adapting the *Signposts* statements then we began adapting the instructional ideas and sample assessment activities.

Signposts will still continue to focus on the reading, writing, document use and numeracy skills needed at work. *Signposts* will continue to serve as curriculum guidelines to help practitioners

decide what to teach to learners who plan to go directly to work after finishing their literacy upgrading.

Who carried out the adaptation?

PTP consultants led a focus group with Deaf Literacy Initiative staff and practitioners from Deaf LBS programs in June of 2009. The purpose of the focus group was to guide PTP in gathering information about Deaf stream needs regarding literacy programming for employment-bound learners. The information helped PTP decide how best to begin the *Signposts* adaptation process.

As result of that focus group, PTP recommended that DLI should take lead in the adaptation process and possibly re-conceptualizing *Signposts* as long the basic concept of Essential Skills and 44 statements were not changed. This recommendation and explanation can be seen in *Appendix A* at end of this report. With this recommendation, a researcher/developer was hired to carry out the adaptation of *Signposts*. It was agreed that 25% of *Signposts* would be adapted and re-conceptualized for piloting with help from experts in the field and with consultation from PTP. In depth information about the adaptation process will be described later in this report.

Adaptation of Signposts Templates:

Templates from the original *Signposts* were adapted by changing the skeleton of the template to better suit the Deaf stream's visual needs and our cultural tendency of starting with a point then ending with the same point as opposed to Anglophone's way of explaining or introducing things by starting in the beginning then finally providing with a "point" at the end.

Twenty-five percent of the *Signposts* were adapted and re-conceptualized to create templates that are meaningful to adult educators about the ways workers use these skills on the job. In the new version of guidelines, a section was created to show links to other resources and to provide with more detailed examples of activities.

Each *Signposts* has been assigned an Essential Skills level or range of levels at which the material can be introduced to learners. Although these materials can be introduced at the levels indicated, they can and should be reinforced at each subsequent Essential Skills level as well. These *Signposts* can be introduced and reinforced throughout learners' programming. Instructors should take into account individuals' prior learning and employment goals to help them select the most appropriate *Signposts* to cover. Those levels or range of levels has *not*

been changed during the adaptation of the curriculum guidelines and will not be when we complete the remaining seventy-five percent of the product.

Consultation from PTP:

While the original plan for this project was for PTP to lead the project under contract with Deaf Literacy Initiative, it was agreed that it would be more effective if Deaf Literacy Initiative took lead on this project due to cultural and linguistic complexity that would be involved in the adaptation of this resource and because of our expertise in Deaf literacy. DLI took lead on adaptation of this project but PTP continued to provide consultation during the process to ensure that the original levels or range of levels using Essential Skills do not get lost in the process.

Expert Advisory Committee:

On November 5th, 2009, DLI invited expert advisors from the field and a PTP consultant. The purpose of the advisory committee was to guide DLI in gathering information and feedback about their experience using *Signposts*. This information could then help DLI decide how best to begin the *Signposts* adaptation process.

DLI requested that the group consist of practitioners with a range of skill, knowledge and expertise as determined by DLI, with a particular focus on including practitioners who might need more support in working with a curriculum guideline document; in this way, DLI would be in a position to ensure the final product meets the needs of practitioners across the range from novice to expert. DLI also requested that the participants be familiar with the *Signposts* document itself.

The expert advisory committees met four times through the year. It began with an orientation to the original *Signposts* and reasons for adapting the original *Signposts* for the Deaf stream. At this meeting, draft templates created by DLI were shown and feedback was gathered. We asked participants to review sample templates by asking them two questions: which features of templates would be useful and which aspects of templates might need to be changed to make the resource more useful for the Deaf stream.

Participants suggested that some information on some pages be revised. Most changes were made because information used in the template was not cultural appropriate. For example, use of telephone should be replaced to use of videophone or e-mail.

Participants also suggested that there should be more examples of activities and they preferred that the curriculum guidelines should also be presented in ASL on DVD because some instructions will be tough for instructors whose second language is English or because some examples will not be explicit enough unless shown in ASL.

The language used in the revised document should adhere to clear language principles from the perspective of Deaf literacy practitioners. This is especially important because English is our second language but also because use of plain language offers higher level of transparency.

It was also suggested that links to websites and resources should be added onto DLI's website. This was suggested because if it was printed on templates, it could become outdated fast but if it was on the website, it could be regularly updated as new resources come in.

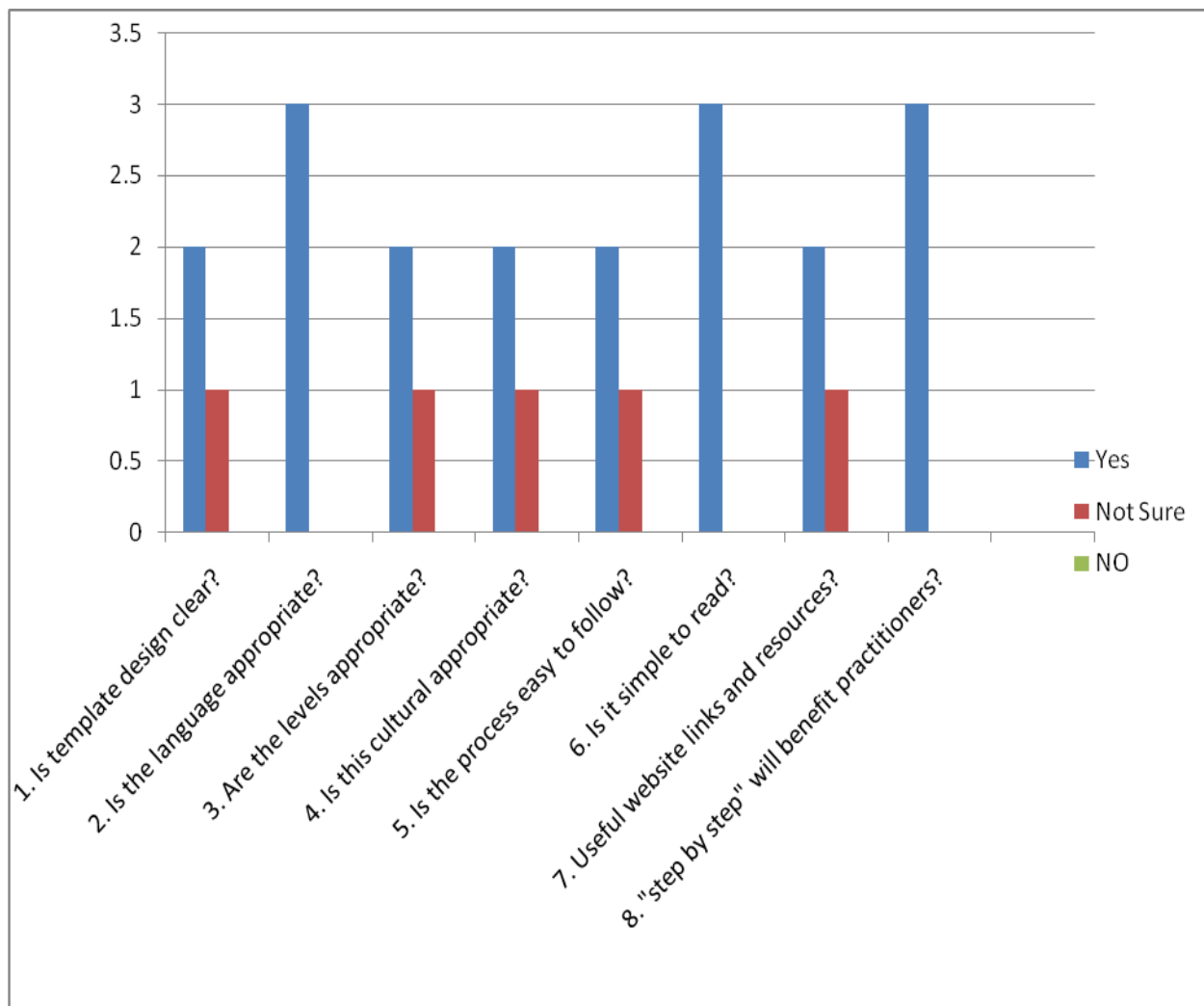
Purpose of ASL DVDs:

The field wants to have an ASL DVD because then they would be able to use the new resource in their first language, and have it accessible in their second language as well. By providing an ASL DVD, a practitioner will be able to utilize the resource easily and quickly. In this case, DLI translated the original *Signposts* into ASL script, and then an ASL DVD was produced.

Piloting:

Prior to piloting, the expert advisory committee met to make final revisions to the adapted curriculum guidelines and outlined piloting protocols. Once that was completed, piloting began at Mohawk College – Deaf Empowerment Program, Niagara Deaf Literacy Program and CHS Toronto – Deaf Workforce Literacy.

During piloting, DLI met with all three programs mid-pilot to do preliminary interviews then met with each practitioner at end of piloting to gather data and do one on one interview to gather feedback in their first language, ASL. Below, you will see results of pilot interviews:



Findings from Piloting:

1) Is template design clear?

Practitioners felt that templates and the use of features were easy to use and understand. The description of Essential Skills and levels were clearly stated, and practitioners felt that it was great to have the Essential Skill level on the top where it is the first thing they see. One feedback on current template, however, was to make sure there was more space between boxes so it would not be visually busy.

2) Is the language appropriate?

Overall, practitioners felt that the language used in the adapted curriculum guidelines were appropriate but some words could have been replaced into a word that is more

commonly used. They feel that it is important to make sure that plain language is used all throughout the resource, so that it would be easy to use for practitioners. In some areas, instructors whose English skills are not strong may have hard time understanding what the information means (example: “infers unstated meaning”).

3) Are the levels appropriate?

Some practitioners felt that the adapted resource were level-appropriate but some practitioners felt that levels could possibly become unclear because if the practitioner asks a learner to do a task in ASL, that learner might seem to be able to do level 3 tasks but if the practitioner asks a learner to do a task in English, that learner might seem to be able to do only level 1 tasks.

4) Is the cultural appropriate?

Some practitioners felt that this new resource could actually be used in any stream and that Deafblind programs could actually adjust it slightly to suit their learners. One practitioner felt that ASL translation should be copied onto DVD, not CD because DVD would be easier to use for practitioners.

5) Is the process easy to follow?

Practitioners felt that the adapted curriculum guidelines were easy to follow and that example activities were very helpful. One practitioner felt that there needed to be more examples for teaching resources and lessons. Assessment part of the resource also left some practitioners with more questions before they started, thus there were not enough information for that part.

6) Is it simple to read?

Pilot participants felt that newly adapted templates were easy to read because fonts and colours were clear. They also felt that the template was well organized with lots of spaces in between text making it easier to read.

7) Do you feel the useful website links and resources help practitioners to find?

Practitioners were especially pleased with the link to resources because it was very useful and it reduced their time preparing to teach, and gave them more time to teach

learners. Some learners actually browsed through some of these resources and were very excited about it. Overall, practitioners felt it was extremely useful.

8) Do you feel “step by step” will benefit practitioners?

All practitioners felt that it was very helpful to have step-by-step instructions. It gave them the confidence and more time to do actual teachings in the classroom. Practitioners felt that they learned better by “doing” as opposed to reading something then trying to think up of an activity to do.

9) Do you have any idea for new name for Signposts?

As agreed with PTP, a new name will be created for this resource because during the project, we learned that we would not be doing adaptations only but also re-conceptualizing some aspects of this resource. A name for this resource will be determined in the next phase with input from the field. Practitioners from piloting sites listed below names as possible names for this new resource:

“Bridge to Deaf Success”

“Deafway to Success”

“Highway of Successful Deaf”

“Highway to a bridge future for a Deaf person”

“Bridge to a bright future for a Deaf person”

“SP” or “Essential Tasks & Skill Development for the Deaf Workers”

“The Deaf Worker’s Environment”: A Guide to Essential Tasks and Skills Development

“The World of Deaf Workers”: A Guide to Essential Tasks and Skills Development

“Way to Work”: Deaf Workforce Literacy and Essential skills Instructional Guidelines

“Write to Work/Right to Work”: Deaf Workforce Literacy and Essential skills Instructional Guidelines

“Getting It Write at Work!”: Deaf Workforce Literacy and Essential skills Instructional Guidelines

“Get It Write at Work!”: Deaf Workforce Literacy and Essential skills Instructional Guidelines

“The Write Way to Work”: Deaf Workforce Literacy and Essential skills Instructional Guidelines

From Original *Signposts* template:

Signposts: Marking the path to employment

Reading Text Signpost: Read notes

Workers in many occupations read notes from supervisors, co-workers or customers to obtain instructions, procedures and information.

Instructional ideas:

Have learners read a variety of notes with opportunities to identify purposes, actions required and sequence of events. Notes can be generated through class activities, can be obtained from program staff or can be created by the instructor.

1. The following are examples of notes from which learners can identify purpose and action required:
 - a. a note from a supervisor about cleaning the kitchen at the end of the day;
 - b. a note from a co-worker about exchanging shifts;
 - c. a note from a co-worker asking the reader to call a customer; and
 - d. a note from a supervisor asking the reader to come to his or her office as soon as possible.

2. The following are examples of notes from which learners can identify purpose, action required and sequence of events:
 - a. a note from a supervisor asking the reader to lock the main doors after a specific visitor arrives;
 - b. a note from a co-worker asking the reader to call once his or her client arrives;
 - c. a note from a supervisor asking the reader to put stock away if his or her other tasks are completed before the end of the shift; or
 - d. a note from a customer asking for a call once a new shipment arrives

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Features at this level: | | | | | What the person can do: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note is short, one to two sentences in length • Content is directly related to the user's work | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies purpose of note • Identifies actions required • Identifies sequence of events | |
| Essential Skill | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Sample Assessment Activity |
| | | | | | | 1.1 |



The newly adapted template:



#2

#1

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------|---|---|---|---|
| Reading Text | | | | | |
| Essential Skill Level: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

#3

Workers read notes:
Workers in many occupations read notes from supervisors, co-workers or customers to get instructions, procedures and information.

#4

I teach:
Teach learner to read different types of notes to

- ❖ understand the reason for the note
- ❖ the actions required
- ❖ the order of events

#5

Preparing to teach:

- ❖ Find/Create different notes (e.g.: from supervisor, or co-worker)
- ❖ Create different notes
- ❖ Put the notes on any place, (e.g.: door, on computer screen, washroom door)

#6

Types of notes I should use:

- ❖ Notes have one or two short sentences
- ❖ Make sure the notes are related to the learners' job goals

#7

What kinds of activities can I use?

1. To teach finding point and action required, I can use:
 - a) a note from a supervisor about cleaning the kitchen at the end of the day;
 - b) a note from a co-worker about exchanging shifts; and
 - c) a note from a supervisor asking the reader to come to his or her office as soon as possible.
2. To teach purpose and action required and order of events, I can use:
 - a) a note from a supervisor asking the learner to lock the main doors after a specific visitor arrives;
 - b) a note from a co-worker asking the learner to call once his or her client arrives; and
 - c) a note from a supervisor asking the learner to put stock away if his or her other duties are finished before the end of the shift.

- #1: Essential Skill Level box was moved up to top of the page.
- #2: A picture box is used to identify what the task involves.
- #3: A clear list of examples of what this level includes in this task.
- #4: This part shows practitioners what they will teach learners in the classroom.
- #5: This part shows what practitioners need to prepare for teaching.
- #6: This part shows what kind of materials could be used in the classroom.
- #7: This part shows practitioners what type of activities could be used in classroom to teach this specific task.

As result of preliminary adaptations to the template, there were more positive responses to the new resource and practitioners felt that this resource could really be useful in their classroom. Further adaptations and re-conceptualizations will be required to complete this resource. Also, an ASL DVD will have to be created to translate the entire resource. Upon completion of this resource, training and implementation will be the next step.

References:

SIGNPOSTS: Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills Instructional Guidelines

Developed by: Ms. Aleksandra Popovic , PTP. ISBN: 1-55-383-078-4

DEAF CAN!: Workforce Literacy Resources

Developed by: Durham Deaf Services

CABS (Common Assessment of Basic Skills): Initial Assessment in 5 Levels

Developed by: Judith Fox Lee & Rose Strohmaier. ISBN: 1-895999-16-2

For link to resources used in the adapted Signposts, please refer to Deaf Literacy Initiative website:

<http://www.deafliteracy.ca/Public/Default.aspx?!=399&n=Signposts+Materials>

APPENDIX A

Curriculum Guidelines Resource Development Report

Deaf Literacy Initiative and PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs

Project:

Deaf Literacy Initiative and PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs are currently engaged in the process of examining PTP's *Signposts* for use in Deaf literacy classrooms. In its present form, *Signposts* is complete and currently used by Anglophone literacy practitioners in Ontario. DLI is interested in an adaptation for the Deaf literacy stream to ensure that it can be used to full advantage in guiding decisions about programming for Deaf learners.

Recommendation:

PTP recommends DLI produce a Deaf stream appropriate curriculum guideline utilizing the original research, concept and purpose behind PTP's *Signposts* curriculum guidelines. This resource should be developed by Deaf literacy professionals. The product would be the property of DLI, and in its preface would acknowledge PTP's *Signposts* as the point of departure for its development. PTP is confident that DLI has the necessary knowledge and expertise to carry out this work.

Findings from Project Activities:

Project Launch Meeting:

On May 29th, 2009 PTP and DLI met to launch the *Signposts* adaptation project. At this meeting, PTP's project workplan was reviewed, activities were discussed and tentative dates for meetings were set.

Focus Group Purpose:

On June 17, 2009 PTP consultants (Karen Geraci and Marisa Mazzulla) led a focus group with Deaf Literacy Initiative staff and practitioners from LBS Deaf literacy programs. The purpose of the focus group was to guide PTP in gathering information about Deaf stream needs regarding literacy programming for employment-bound learners. This information could then help PTP decide how best to begin the *Signposts* adaptation process. PTP requested that the group consist of practitioners with a range of skill, knowledge and expertise as determined by DLI, with a particular focus on including practitioners who might need more support in working with a

curriculum guideline document; in this way, PTP would be in a position to ensure the final product meets the needs of practitioners across the range from novice to expert. PTP also requested that the participants be familiar with both the *Signposts* document itself and a backgrounder (sent by PTP to DLI staff June 8th, 2009) in order to be prepared to participate in the focus group.

Focus Group Process:

The focus group ran for approximately 2 and a half hours. It began with an overview of the project delivered by DLI project staff to participants. PTP consultants followed with an overview of *Signposts* before seeking input from participants.

We asked participants to review sample pages in *Signposts* to consider:

- The features of *Signposts* that would be useful to Deaf literacy practitioners.
- The aspects of *Signposts* that might need to change in order to make the resource more useful.

Focus Group Findings:

The focus group participants suggested ways *Signposts* could be revised to suite practitioners' needs. Participants suggested that:

- DLI's version of *Signposts* be presented in ASL on DVD as well as in English. During the focus group, this suggestion was made several times by different participants.
- The layout of information on each page be revised. For example, one participant suggested that the 'features' and 'what the person can do' box be placed at the top of the page instead of being displayed at the bottom.
- The guidelines include references to specific print and web resources so that practitioners can easily make the link between the curriculum guidelines and available learning resources and activities. One participant suggested that an on-line repository of resources could be set up that practitioners could access for classroom resources.
- Visuals be included to help illustrate concepts. A participant suggested that the driver's education handbook be used as a model of a resource where illustrations help support the text.
- Writers review effective resources used in the Deaf literacy classroom. The "Signing Naturally" series was suggested as a good resource to consult.
- A checklist be included to allow practitioners to keep a record as they monitor learner progress. The checklist could be designed so practitioners could make copies for each learner. One checklist for each of the four skills covered in the resource could be included at the end of the section for each skill. The checklist could indicate levels and include space to enter progress notes, strengths and weaknesses.
- Additional explanations be provided to make illustrative examples clearer. For example, on page 4 participants would like to see more explanation about why there are two sets of

instructional ideas presented. They suggested that visual cues such as bold could be used to help illustrate the distinctions between the groups of instructional ideas.

- One participant provided this suggestion privately: that the resource start with a concrete example of the *signpost* and work out to general instructional ideas, then finish with an assessment activity.
- That *Signposts* undergo a clear language review with the new readership in mind. Some terms commonly used in Anglophone literacy resources may not be used by Deaf literacy practitioners.

In addition to suggestions, we also found that the questions posed by the participants helped us understand what type of resource might be suitable. Participants asked about:

- The connection between *Signposts* and existing resources. Through these questions we learned more about the role curriculum guidelines could play for practitioners. We also learned that practitioners wanted explicit links between curriculum guidelines and the learning materials they would draw from to give learners practice developing the skills described in *Signposts*.
- How terminology was used in the resource. For example, some participants suggested that terms such as *learner*, *reader*, *supervisor* and *co-worker* in the instructional ideas could be confusing to the user of the resource. Participants requested further explanation on the role of learners in the hypothetical situation described in the instructional ideas.

Implications of Findings:

PTP learned a great deal from the input provided by DLI stream practitioners and staff during the focus group. There are significant implications from these findings for the development of a useful resource. In order to ensure that the DLI has an effective resource for the intended audience, the development should take the following into consideration:

The language used in the revised document should adhere to clear language principles from the perspective of Deaf literacy practitioners. For example, care should be taken to ensure that the intended audience commonly understands the vocabulary used. Input from DLI will be required to ensure that the resource is clear.

Consideration should be given to the many ways in which the instructional ideas can be presented. For example, it may be more effective if each instructional idea is addressed with a written explanation, a visual to illustrate the explanation and an ASL recording on DVD. The revised resource could include instructional ideas with more explanation and links to learning activities, rather than the current format of including numerous instructional ideas each described only briefly.

Adaptation vs. Re-conceptualization:

A resource adaptation would address the question: *How can we work with Signposts to make it appropriate for deaf literacy practitioners?* An adaptation would result in a resource that is much like the original in many ways. For example, an adapted *Signposts* would still be organized in the same way and would still include instructional ideas and some sample assessment activities. Each aspect of the resource would be edited as needed to ensure its relevance, but similar content would still be presented. If more significant organizational and content changes are desired, a re-conceptualization would be a more appropriate process.

A re-conceptualization would allow the writers to start from the question: *What do Deaf literacy practitioners need in terms of curriculum guidelines for employment-bound learners?* A re-conceptualization would result in a resource that still acts as curriculum guidelines, but may look quite different than the original. A re-conceptualized *Signposts* could include concrete examples, visuals, references to learning activities and an entirely different model to make the link between the expectations at work and the activities instructors can use in the classroom.

Recommendation:

Considering the input, PTP has ascertained that in order to make *Signposts* appropriate for Deaf literacy programming it should undergo a re-conceptualization, rather than an adaptation. This would allow DLI to use *Signposts* as the foundation for developing a Deaf literacy curriculum guideline resource without the limitations an adaptation might impose.

A re-conceptualization would allow DLI to lead the development process. DLI would carry out the analysis and develop the content. PTP recognizes that DLI is in the position to do this work because it has both the knowledge of Deaf literacy needs and the expertise to develop valuable products for the stream. The resulting document would then be the sole property of DLI. PTP would only ask that DLI acknowledge that the original research, concept and purpose came from PTP's *Signposts*.

Next steps:

Given these findings, PTP and DLI should reach an understanding of the role PTP could play, if any, in DLI's work. Once this decision has been made, a new project plan should be put in place by DLI.

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