

# Module 7: Workforce Literacy in the Deaf & Deaf-Blind Literacy Classroom

## Introduction:

As a new practitioner, you will need to know about workforce literacy (WFL). In this module, we will explain the purpose and importance of workforce literacy.

We will also suggest some ways you can include workforce literacy activities into your daily literacy program.

## Background:

Literacy programs are separated into four groups, called **streams**:

1. **The Anglophone Stream** (English speaking)
2. **The Francophone Stream** (French speaking)
3. **The Native Stream** (Aboriginal)
4. **The Deaf/Deaf-Blind Stream** (ASL and other)

All four streams are funded by Employment Ontario (EO).

### **A Short History Lesson:**

Employment Ontario was created when the Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSD) signed a Labour Market Partnership Agreement (LMPA) with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). Find more information on Employment Ontario at [www.eopg.ca](http://www.eopg.ca)

HRSD is now called HRSDC, Human Resources and Social Development Canada. Find more information at [www.hrsdc.gc.ca](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca)

Practitioners in the Deaf and Deaf-Blind Stream want to understand more about workforce literacy. The questions they ask most often include:

- **What is workforce literacy?**
- **Why is WFL important?**
- **What do I need to do?**
- **How do I teach WFL?**

These are important points, and this module will give answers to each of these questions.

The term “**workforce**” may be new to you. **Workforce** relates to people who want to work, or who already have jobs.



## What is Workforce Literacy?

HRSDC explains workforce literacy this way:

### **Workforce Literacy**

“The skills people need for work, for learning, and for life. These basic skills are the foundation for learning all other skills. They are the beginning of lifelong learning.”

Workforce Literacy training focuses on skills needed to **get a job** or to **keep a job**. Training may be done in classroom, in a small groups, or one-to-one.

Workforce literacy programs were set up because Canadian employers want their workers to improve their “essential skills.”

What are essential skills?

**Essential Skills include:**

- ⇒ Reading Text
- ⇒ Document Use
- ⇒ Numeracy
- ⇒ Writing
- ⇒ Oral Communications (Written Communications)
- ⇒ Working with other People
- ⇒ Thinking Skills
- ⇒ Computer Use
- ⇒ Continuous Learning

## Why is WFL important?

WFL is an important part of our literacy programs. For our learners, it is even more important. Developing workforce literacy skills will help the learner:

- have a better chance of getting hired
- be better prepared for work
- learn new skills needed to get a better job
- be more successful in their life and their work

Our world today is very focused on technology. Technology is everywhere in our daily lives. We see changes and “upgrades” almost every day.

These changes impact our lives. They also impact the workplace. Companies must find ways to keep up with technology and manage change. If they don't, they cannot remain competitive in the working world.

Employers expect their workers to have essential skills already so they can continue learning and keep up with changes. Employers also expect workers to handle changing job demands. That is why WFL literacy programs were created.

## What do I need to do?


As practitioners, we sometimes struggle with workforce literacy. How do we introduce WFL to our learners? Here are a few ideas:

- Begin by introducing some of the tools used in the workplace. For example: timesheets, inventory lists, assembly instructions, cash registers, and so on. If possible, have these authentic or real-life tools in the classroom and include hands-on activities for the learners.
- Discuss what skills people must have to do different tasks or jobs. Your group could develop a “mock” business. Have the learners identify the skills and tools needed for these different jobs, based on their past employment experience.
- Gather authentic (real-life) materials from businesses, stores, and offices. For example: forms, fliers, receipts, inventory lists, invoices, and so on. Develop a skills checklist of what the learners will need to know and understand from these authentic materials. Create learning activities that touch on each skills area.
- When the learners are ready, test their skills by using authentic materials (unchanged materials). Keep these “demonstrations” in the learners’ files.

The goal of workforce literacy is to help learners develop transferable skills; skills that can be applied to different tasks in the classroom, on **the job, or at home. In the Deaf and Deaf-Blind stream, we focus on:**


- ⇒ computer skills,
- ⇒ organizational skills (planning),
- ⇒ prioritizing,
- ⇒ reading for understanding,
- ⇒ scanning to find facts,
- ⇒ reading and writing to communicate,
- ⇒ problem solving,
- ⇒ working with other people,
- ⇒ number skills,
- ⇒ safety and safe habits,
- ⇒ and other skills needed for employment.

There are several resources available to teach these kinds of activities. You will want to look at these:

 **Deaf Literacy Initiative (DLI)** recently created two excellent resources:


1. Deaf Literacy Skills for the Workplace
2. Deaf Literacy Skills for the Workforce

These two resources provide the foundational concepts of WFL learners need to know.

 **Durham Deaf Services (DDS)** also developed a WFL resource:

1. *DEAF CAN! Workforce Literacy Resources*

This workforce literacy resource focuses on the top 10 entry level jobs for Deaf people.

 **Preparatory Training Programs (PTP)**, now called **Pathway to Possibilities**, developed an excellent resource: [www.ptp.ca/](http://www.ptp.ca/)

1. Workwrite - 4 books - Organizing Information, Schedules, Information forms and Workplace Communications.

## How do I teach WFL?

Workforce literacy can be included in the learner's regular daily program. Activities can be made to fit the learner's short-term goals. These activities are real-life based so are transferable to their daily life. Some examples of WFL activities include:

- work orders
- estimate cost forms
- inventory lists
- order forms
- shipping forms
- scale drawings
- invoices

Before you start teaching WFL, you will need to know the material well yourself. It will take some research on your part, but soon you will understand the importance of workforce literacy.

### What is the Difference?

As you begin researching, you will see three terms used when talking about life management and employment:

- 1. Workforce Literacy**
- 2. Workplace Literacy**
- 3. Employability Skills**

Some practitioners may not understand the difference between these three areas. It is important for you to know and understand the difference.

We have already discussed workforce literacy. Now we will focus on Workplace Literacy.

- 2. Workplace Literacy** is a fee for service literacy development program. It is for people who are already working. This service is usually offered through special literacy service agencies. It is important that workers have access to workplace literacy training so they can develop new skills and stay competitive in the workplace.

Workplace literacy helps employees develop the essential skills needed at work. This allows them to be more productive, knowledgeable, and able to do more tasks on the job. It also allows the learner to keep their job while they learn.

- 3. Employability Skills** is a general program that teaches job readiness skills. The skills areas include: basic academic skills, thinking skills, job search, and proper work behaviour. Employability skills can be taught in the classroom or in the workplace. Job placement is often part of this training program.

This chart will show you a few examples of specific skills learned in each category. (short list for the signer)

Workforce Literacy	Workplace Literacy	Employability Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Filling out timesheets</li> <li>• Reading and understanding instructions</li> <li>• Understanding workplace safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking courses or training</li> <li>• Learning to use machines</li> <li>• Writing incident reports (accidents)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job search skills</li> <li>• Interview skills</li> <li>• Goal setting</li> </ul>

(Long list for text version)

Workforce Literacy	Workplace Literacy	Employability Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing reports</li> <li>• Checking inventory</li> <li>• Checking off task items</li> <li>• Completing timesheets</li> <li>• Completing forms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using blueprints</li> <li>• Corresponding with employees</li> <li>• Taking courses or training</li> <li>• Understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aptitude tests</li> <li>• Interest inventory</li> <li>• Application forms</li> <li>• Cover letters</li> <li>• Interview skills</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counting stock</li> <li>• Entering information on activity forms</li> <li>• Using journals</li> <li>• Reading/writing letters</li> <li>• Using memos</li> <li>• Organizing files</li> <li>• Putting information onto graphs</li> <li>• Reading blueprints</li> <li>• Reading instructions</li> <li>• Understanding schedules</li> <li>• Understanding workplace safety</li> <li>• Writing incident reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diagrams</li> <li>• Reading drawings</li> <li>• Learning how to use machines</li> <li>• Reading manuals</li> <li>• Organizing inventory</li> <li>• Reading and interpreting documents</li> <li>• Reading instructions</li> <li>• Reading reports</li> <li>• Reading regulations</li> <li>• Reading specifications</li> <li>• WHMIS training</li> <li>• Understanding workplace safety</li> <li>• Writing incident reports</li> <li>• Writing, completing and producing documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job search</li> <li>• Job search skills</li> <li>• Mock interviews</li> <li>• Resumes</li> <li>• Assertiveness</li> <li>• Appropriate dress</li> <li>• Communication skills</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Goal setting</li> <li>• Grooming/Hygiene</li> <li>• Getting and keeping a job</li> <li>• Learning styles</li> <li>• Personal management</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Self awareness</li> <li>• Self esteem</li> <li>• Time management</li> </ul>
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Employers expect people to have employability skills and workforce literacy skills before they apply for a job. Employers are looking to hire people who:

- are job ready
- have competitive job skills
- have skills in reading, writing, numeracy, problem solving, thinking, and computers
- are ready to do different kinds of tasks and learn as they go
- are able to work independently or as part of a team
- have the essential skills needed to enter or re-enter the workforce



## Workforce Literacy vs. Workplace Literacy

This chart shows the difference between **workforce literacy** and **workplace literacy** in Ontario.

	<b>Workforce Literacy</b>	<b>Workplace Literacy</b>
Cost	The LBS program funded by EO	Funded by employers (companies), labour union and their representatives
Where	Classroom at LBS Agencies	Taught at the workplace, unions, LBS agency or at another place
Who	Learners who have employment goal (want to work) – need job readiness skills	Workers who already have a job but have a specific goal and need more training to develop skills
How	Learners each have a training plan designed to meet their workforce literacy goals (individual)	Workplace training is the same for all employees no matter what their different needs are
What	Some LBS agencies offer trade specific learning activities	Some workers will go to their local LBS agency for academic upgrading to meet the needs of the workplace

It is important you understand the different between workforce literacy, workplace literacy, and employability skills. It will help you focus on your role as a **workforce literacy practitioner**.