

Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework

Foundations of Learning Materials

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Document History

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1.0	April 2011	Initial version
1.1	October 2011	Page 6, table of online program options for e-Channel initiative: Reference to <i>Éduclicontario</i> removed Reference to <i>Service de formation à distance (F@D pour adultes de l'Ontario)</i> added

What is this document about?

This Foundations of Learning Materials paper

- defines what learning materials are and provides some examples
- discusses the role of learning materials in the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF)
- talks about assigning levels to learning materials
- identifies who uses learning materials in the LBS Program
- details who develops learning materials for LBS learners and practitioners
- discusses culture and language in learning materials
- describes some Ontario Adult Learning Curriculum Framework (OALCF) tools to assess and use learning materials

What are Learning Materials?

Learning materials are resources that practitioners and learners use for the purposes of literacy instruction and learning. They include materials in a variety of print and non-print formats, such as

- books, workbooks, and worksheets
- print and online courses
- audio and visual learning supports
- Web-based materials
- CD-ROMs with audio and animated activities
- resource lists and guides
- manuals, instructional guides, and handbooks
- alternate format materials, including audio and braille
- authentic documents, such as newspapers, catalogues, and job applications

What is the role of Learning Materials in the OALCF?

Learning materials within the new Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) directly support learners in gaining the ability to integrate and apply the skills, knowledge and attitudes that are required to achieve their goals of employment, further education and training or independence. These learner objectives can be met with LBS programming that includes instructional learner material that is goal-directed; is related to the context of the learner's program purpose, culture and language; and which integrates the additional supports a learner may need through service coordination.

To identify learning materials that reflect the OALCF focus of being goal-directed, contextualized and linked to other services a learner may need to support her or his learning success, a practitioner chooses learning materials that

- are suitable to adults and appropriate to the culture and language of the learner
- are authentic, related to the learner's program purpose, and task-based
- reflect the way information is used and accessed in the work, learning or community environment of the learner's goal

LBS service providers are well positioned to implement the new OALCF because of the range of high quality materials that are already available to practitioners. The OALCF supports practitioners in selecting materials that promote the integration and application of learning and also supports practitioners to use the materials to reflect authentic and meaningful uses of literacy.

LBS service providers are also well supported by the *LBS Program Guidelines*, which state that LBS Program service providers use learning materials based on adult education principles. These materials meet a range of adult learner needs and experiences. They also respond to the different learning styles and cultural backgrounds of literacy learners in Ontario. The learning materials used by an LBS service provider, therefore, reflect the degree to which the provider's services carry out the mandate and philosophy of the LBS Program.

Both LBS service providers and their learning materials should be

- flexible—to accommodate the varying needs of learners and their communities
- learner-centred—to respect the adult learner and provide supportive learning environments
- goal-directed—to support learners as they develop achievable goals related to further education and training, employment, or independence
- results-based—to assist learners in reaching their goals

Furthermore, LBS learning materials should

- provide opportunities for learners to develop skills, knowledge, and behaviours required to meet identified goals
- use approaches and methods that not only respect learners, but also encourage them to participate individually and collectively in their programming—enabling them to control their learning
- have structures and supports in place to increase access and equitable outcomes to help learners from all backgrounds reach their goals
- be suitable for adult learners and relevant to their needs

The Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) supports practitioners to continue to meet LBS Program principles related to the selection, adaptation, or creation of appropriate learning materials. It also supports the development of learning materials that provide learners with opportunities to develop their abilities within meaningful contexts and to transfer newly acquired abilities to real world settings.

Assigning levels to learning materials

Using school grade levels

From 1986 to 1998, literacy practitioners had few Ontario-based adult literacy materials available and no consistent method to determine their level of difficulty. Practitioners used a wide range of learning materials, including authentic sources, such as shopping catalogues, newspapers, and maps. They also used Ontario elementary and secondary school curriculum workbooks, practitioner-created materials, and materials from other jurisdictions. These learning materials either had no levels assigned or used a grade-based system. The lack of appropriate adult instructional materials and the absence of a consistent way to assign levels of complexity to them made it difficult for practitioners to choose learning materials accurately.

Using LBS and Essential Skills levels

In 1998, the *Working with Learning Outcomes, Validation Draft* document was introduced as part of the reform of the LBS Program. Three learning outcomes, communication, numeracy, and self-management/self-direction, are identified; and communications and numeracy are scaled to five levels of skills development. The LBS Program is outcomes-based but its five levels relate to discrete literacy and numeracy skills as they can be found in the Ontario elementary school curriculum. The LBS levels do not capture the higher level learning offered through academic upgrading programs in colleges. Although learning materials have been described using the five LBS levels, the system is limited in its usefulness for helping practitioners determine the levels of authentic, task-based materials and higher level materials.

Since many learners' goals are employment related, LBS practitioners have been greatly assisted by the nine Human Resources Development Canada (HRSDC) Essential Skills found in its occupational descriptions. The five levels of the Essential Skills are based on the 500-point scale of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and are the skills found in tasks.

Although the LBS levels and the ES levels have been useful for practitioners, their levels are not comparable scales. The LBS levels describe the discrete skills development of a learner, and the Essential Skills rely heavily on information processing skills to define the complexity levels of tasks. A clear correlation between the LBS Levels and ES levels does not exist. Therefore, practitioners have found it difficult to navigate around these scales to choose and compare learning materials that are appropriate at a level of complexity to meet a learner's needs.

Using levels within the new curriculum framework

The OALCF describes three levels of task complexity. Developers of the OALCF have developed tools to support practitioners in their selection of appropriate learning materials that meet learners' goals, levels, and cultural and linguistic needs.

Who uses Learning Materials in the LBS Program?

Learning materials in the LBS program are used by adult literacy learners who

- are from diverse cultural and language backgrounds, including anglophone, Deaf and Deaf-Blind, francophone, and Native learners
- access literacy programming in different settings, such as in college, school board, and community-based environments
- access programming through different delivery modes, such as through face-to-face instruction, computer-based products, or through blended programming with a non-LBS-funded service provider, such as a school board delivering secondary school credits
- are working toward achieving goals related to employment, further education and training, or independence
- are from urban, rural, or remote areas of Ontario
- have different learning styles
- have learning disabilities

Who develops Learning Materials for LBS Learners?

An extensive infrastructure supporting the development and distribution of appropriate learning materials for LBS learners has been in place for decades. In addition to the wealth of learning materials available from national and international publishing houses and the Web, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) funds numerous support organizations to develop materials that reflect the needs of Ontario's diverse literacy learners. Consequently, a significant repository of learner-centred, goal-directed, and culturally and linguistically appropriate learning materials is available for LBS service providers. These materials are available in a variety of media and formats.

These support organizations respond to the

- culture and language of the learner
- required modes of delivery
- required delivery settings
- service needs of LBS service providers, for example, materials publishing or technical support

Publishing adult literacy learning materials

MTCU provides funding to Centre FORA and the Ningwakwe Learning Press, two of the support organizations that develop culture- and language-based multimedia materials for practitioners and learners.

- Centre FORA (<http://www.centrefora.on.ca/>) has been developing and distributing quality adult literacy learning materials in French since 1989. It publishes 20 to 25 titles annually.
- Ningwakwe Learning Press (NLP) (<http://www.ningwakwe.on.ca/>) has been publishing culturally appropriate resources for Ontario Native literacy programs and agencies since 1996. Geared to adult First Nation, Inuit, and Métis learners, the learning materials are culture-based and reflect the contemporary realities of Ontario's Native population.

Online resources and Ontario's e-Channel initiative

Since the late 1980s, MTCU has supported the use of computers and technology, and the development of innovative adult learning resources using digital technologies. These learning materials target adult literacy learners who prefer to learn online.

AlphaRoute, a groundbreaking online resource

One such online learning resource is *AlphaRoute*, developed for anglophone, Deaf, francophone, and Native learners in the LBS Program. Developed and managed by AlphaPlus since 1998, this online learning environment has served over 20,000 Ontario literacy learners. While originally designed to support learners unable to attend LBS-funded agencies due to their distance from a service provider location, *AlphaRoute* currently supports onsite delivery. It offers learners and practitioners some flexibility in how and when they engage with instructional materials and with each other.

Ontario's e-Channel initiative

The launch of MTCU's e-Channel Initiative in 2003 expanded the scope of programming options and the audiences for online learning. LBS Program learners and practitioners can now take advantage of the following online program options:

Program	Audience	Program Details
AlphaPlus www.alphaplus.ca	Employment Ontario educators, researchers, and administrators	AlphaPlus supplies web-based tools, training, and consulting to Literacy and Basic Skills service providers so they can teach more effectively and train their learners to use technology. In addition, AlphaPlus researches innovative learning technologies and practices, disseminates information, and provides forums for collaboration and the exchange of knowledge.
Contact North www.contactnorth.ca	anglophone, Deaf, francophone, and Native learners and practitioners	Contact North provides the infrastructure for online classroom and meeting space for learners and practitioners of adult literacy. The Web-based conferencing tool allows users to hear and interact with instructors and other learners or participants from a location of their choice.
Good Learning Anywhere www.siouxhudsonliteracy.com	Native learners	Sioux Hudson Literacy Council runs the <i>Good Learning Anywhere</i> program that provides

Program	Audience	Program Details
		courses to First Nations, Métis, and Aboriginal individuals, communities, and organizations in Ontario. Courses focus on meeting the needs of adult learners in a holistic and culturally supportive way.
The Learning Hub www.learninghub.ca	anglophone learners	The Centres of Employment and Learning of the Avon Maitland District School Board run its online Literacy and Basic Skills programs, including <i>The Learning Hub</i> .
Service de formation à distance (F@D pour adultes de l'Ontario) www.sefad.ca	francophone learners	The Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes (COFA) runs the program F@D pour adultes de l'Ontario to provide online literacy programs in French.
Deaf Literacy Initiative www.deafliteracy.ca	Deaf and Deaf-Blind learners	George Brown College is the current acting lead organization for the development of the eChannel program for Deaf learners.
ACE Distance Delivery www.acedistancedelivery.ca	College preparation learners	The College Sector Committee is the lead organization delivering online academic upgrading programming through <i>ACE Distance Delivery</i> .

Other sources of learning materials

Other important sources of learning materials are available to adult literacy practitioners in Ontario through publishers and bookstores, such as

- New Readers Press (<http://www.newreaderspress.com>), a publisher of adult basic education and literacy materials
- Grass Roots Press (<http://www.grassrootsbooks.net/ca>), an Alberta based press that has published and distributed adult literacy resources since 1998
- Frontier College New Readers Bookstore(<http://www.frontiercollegenewreadersbookstore.com>), a virtual bookstore offering a wide variety of resources for tutors, literacy practitioners, and learners
- GoodMinds.com (<http://goodminds.com>), providing educational resources for use with Native learners

More information about the OALCF's research and development projects can be found in AlphaPlus' Field Development Projects Database (<http://2.alphaplus.ca/afield/index.htm>). Many of the products resulting from project-based funding are also available from the Library section of the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) (<http://www.nald.ca>).

What is the role of culture and language in Learning Materials?

The LBS Program recognizes that language gives access to knowledge and values, and enables learners to establish positive relationships with others. It also recognizes that culture is strongly tied to a sense of belonging that contributes to improved social and personal self-esteem, and participation in the community. Learning materials that reflect language and culture can contribute to learners' sense of

- belonging, by reflecting the language, culture, and other important features of their lives.
- self-esteem and pride, by containing important cultural knowledge not found in mainstream learning materials.
- engagement, by portraying role models that reflect others in their communities, workplaces, and families.

LBS service providers are supported by the following four umbrella organizations that, among their services and products, develop learning materials responding to the unique language and cultural needs of anglophone, Deaf, francophone, and Native learners.

Support Organization	Contact	Learners Served
1. La Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes (COFA)	http://www.coalition.ca	francophone
2. Deaf Literacy Initiative (DLI)	http://www.deafliteracy.ca	Deaf
3. Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC)	http://www.on.literacy.ca	anglophone
4. Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (ONLC)	http://www.onlc.ca	Native

What OALCF tools will support working with Learning Materials?

The OALCF will support and guide practitioners by providing tools to help them evaluate the appropriateness of their learning materials for a literacy learner, and then to use these materials to meet the learner's level of proficiency, goal, and cultural or linguistic needs. Underlying the development of these tools were the following guiding principles:

- Learning materials should support the continued use of existing resources.
- Learning materials should be appropriate for, and accessible to, learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
- Learning materials should be appropriate for a learner's goal path.
- Learning materials should make practitioners' jobs easier.

The Learning Materials Evaluation Tool

The *Learning Materials Evaluation Tool* provides practitioners with standards for assessing learning materials to determine their “fit” within the OALCF. These standards apply to both print and non-print materials, including online resources. The standards will help practitioners evaluate a resource’s

- content quality
- potential effectiveness as a teaching or learning tool
- ease of use for both practitioners and learners

Five lists of selected learning materials

The purpose of the five lists of selected learning materials is to present examples of learning materials currently used in Ontario’s adult literacy programs and to show how the learning materials can be used with the competencies and goal paths of the OALCF. A separate *Selected Learning Materials List* has been created for use with learners who are anglophone, Deaf, francophone, and Native, and for use with learners participating in college academic upgrading programs. Learning materials in the lists were selected based on practitioner feedback about materials that they had used successfully in their programming. Each list has 25 learning materials.

The resources chosen for the selected learning materials lists are based on the following criteria:

- The learning materials are described by practitioners as resources with which they like to work, use often, or find effective.
- The learning materials are currently available and can relate to the new curriculum framework.
- The learning materials include a range of print, non-print, and online learning materials that give practitioners examples of how they can continue to meet the diverse needs and learning styles of LBS learners.
- The learning materials can be successfully rated using the *Learning Materials Evaluation Tool*.

How to use the Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials

The purpose of the *How To Use the Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials* document is to provide practitioners with a demonstration of how to use the *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials* and to understand the lists of selected learning materials.

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