bargaining basic skills

WHAT UNIONS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT NEGOTIATING WORKER-CENTRED LITERACY PROGRAMS

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LEARNING IN SOLIDARITY

Bargaining Basic Skills:

What unions should know about negotiating
worker-centred literacy programs

Publie en français sous le titre, *Comment negocier la formation de basepour les travailleurs et les travailleuses : guide syndical*.

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Other resources in the *Learning in Solidarity* series:

- What Unions Should Know about Getting the Money for Literacy and Basic Skills Programs
- Making It Clear: Clear Language for Union Communications
- Learning for our Lives: A Union Guide to Worker-Centred Literacy

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Foreword

This handbook is another in a series of tools being developed by the Canadian Labour Congress as part of its action plan, *Learning in Solidarity: Sharing a Vision of Union Literacy*. A key objective of the action plan is to share the wealth of collective experience and information we have gained in order to help the labour movement play a more active role and have a stronger voice in worker-centred literacy.

We want to thank the many union literacy advocates and activists who have helped shape labour's vision of workplace literacy. We have drawn heavily on the expertise the labour movement has developed over the years.

I would like to thank John Anderson for his work in researching and writing this handbook and Tamara Levine, Co-ordinator of the CLC's Workplace Literacy Project for co-ordinating and providing direction to the project. In addition, I would like to express my appreciation to the members of the project reference group for their in sightful feed back and advice: Laurell Ritchie, CAW; Gary Wylie, BEST, OFL; Jorge Garcia- Orgales, UFCW; Stacey Rousseau, UNITE; Ian Thorn, CEP; and Danny Mallett, CLC.

Jean-Claude Parrot,
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About this handbook

This handbook is designed to help unions negotiate literacy and basic skills programs for their members. It is intended for those just starting to consider the possibility of bargaining for a literacy program. It is also for those unions which already have language on training but are seeking to add a basic skills component.

This handbook is part of the *Learning in Solidarity* series of CLC resources on various aspects of literacy and basic skills for unions.

We have tried to cover most of the bases as far as literacy and basic skills bargaining are concerned. But in the end, the point we would like to emphasize is that bringing in a literacy program is not only an important way to serve and reach out to our members, but that the process need not be too difficult or time consuming.

The keys to success are: listening to your members, knowing about other successful union programs, exploring the needs of your workplace and industry, and making literacy programs a part of your overall bargaining strategy. Educating and mobilizing your membership around the need for basic skills will ensure that you have the best chances of winning.

Basic skills is a relatively low cost item compared to many other issues on the bargaining agenda. It is also one which is an essential foundation for other education and training programs.

This handbook is divided into five sections. The first section, Six Good Reasons to Bargain Basic Skills, examines very briefly why unions should become involved in bargaining basic skills. It shows why basic skills have become a key issue for today's unions.

The second section, *Worker-Centred Learning*, looks at the essence of a union program on basic skills. A worker-centred approach is contrasted with an employer-centred approach and details why union programs are and can be different.

The third section, *Planning for Bargaining*, is the heart of the handbook. In a step by step manner, it outlines the five stages in the bargaining process:

- Learning About Your Employer and Your Union (this stage includes three different surveys you can use to help analyze your needs)
- Drafting a Proposal
- Different Views of Literacy and Basic Skills From Employers and Unions
- Inside the Negotiations
- Keeping the Membership Informed and Continuous Bargaining

At each stage, the handbook provides concrete tips and workbook exercises that can help you prepare a bargaining agenda.

The fourth section, *Basic Skills and Public Education*, examines how unions can partner with public education institutions and unions to deliver their programs. This follows on the 1998 *CLC Protocol on the Delivery of Training, Education and Employment Services*, which highlights the essential role for public education in union training.

The fifth section of the handbook contains a series of examples, *Stories from the Front lines*, which describe some of the success stories out there as far as unions are concerned. It also includes model clauses drawn from existing collective agreements. You can use these clauses to help you write your own language. This section can also help you if you are bargaining outside of the regular negotiation process.

There are short pieces on:

- Quebec and BC: Laws on Training
- How Many Unions Have Contract Language?

We hope this handbook proves to be a useful tool and welcome any suggestions for future changes or additions. Hopefully, we can soon rewrite the model clause section with a whole new group of basic skills clauses!

Introduction

This handbook is a tool for union members interested in negotiating literacy and basic skills programs. It is part of the CLC's *Learning in Solidarity* series on the benefits of literary and basic skills programs for unions and their members.

What do we mean by literacy and basic skills?

We usually think of the word literacy in simple terms. We think of someone as literate or illiterate. A person is able to read and write or they are not. However, in recent years this narrow view has given way to a new and broader way of looking at literacy.

We now see literacy as a continuum of skills that people develop throughout their lives. For example, the International Adult Literacy Survey uses the term literacy to refer to "the ability to understand and use printed information in daily activities at home,at work and in the community - to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential." so the question is no longer whether someone is literate or not. Rather, the question is how one's skills meet the literacy demands presented within the various contexts of our lives.

Why are basic skills important?

Most union contracts do not have clauses on training. Fewer still have provisions on basic skills.

Yet basic skills are always important for workers, no matter what the economic environment. The UN says Canada is the number one country in the world in which to live. Yet a recent international study reveals that some 48 per cent of the Canadian population has major difficulties in reading!

Keeping pace

There is also increasing pressure on union members to improve their skills in today's rapidly changing workplace. At the same time, there are fewer adult basic education programs offered by the public education system and more cutbacks to labour and community programs funded directly by government.

Some excellent publicly funded literacy programs still exist (see *What Unions Should Know About Getting the Money for Literacy and Basic Skills Programs*, CLC 1998). But we can no longer rely on governments and public education programs alone to deliver the goods.

It is becoming increasingly clear that unions must make basic skills training a bargaining priority. At the same time, we must continue to fight against government cutbacks and closures in the public education system.

Empowering workers

Literacy and basic skills programs are key building blocks in any program of lifelong learning. Reading and writing skills still remain the basis of any education and training program, despite the rapid development of new technologies. These programs are also a way to increase membership awareness of the union and encourage participation.

Literacy and basic skills programs empower workers. Basic skills training helps workers take control of their lives individually and collectively,providing workers with the tools to acquire new knowledge and ideas. Workers are able to develop a better understanding about their situations at work, at home,in the union and in the community. Literacy skills ultimately help show us how we can change the world for the better.

What's in a name?

Literacy and basic skills training go by many different names. It does not really matter what names you use as long as you and the employer are clear about what they mean. You should define them in the collective agreement to make sure that there is no dispute about the essential meaning.

- *Workplace education:* includes a wide range of foundational skills, including literacy.
- *Basic skills:* includes literacy and numeracy.
- *Foundation skills:* used to show that these skills are the essential foundation to further education and training.
- *Communications skills:* include literacy, public speaking, etc.
- *Literacy:* means reading and writing.
- *Numeracy:* basic mathematics.

However, it is important to recognize that the term literacy still carries with it a stigma. People don't want to be thought of as illiterate. Signing up for a course needs to be viewed as a positive step. That's why unions have chosen terms like basic skills,foundation skills and essential skills to capture the new and broader definition of literacy. Whatever the name, we are talking about programs that build on members' literacy abilities and that also build on our members' lives.

SECTION 1

Six good reasons to bargain basic skills

1. Union members want more education and training

- Jobs are less secure. Hardly a day goes by without news of major plant closings, layoffs or mergers and takeovers. Only about 1 in 3 of the new jobs created in 1998 was a permanent, full-time, paid job. An astounding 57 per cent of jobs created forewomen in 1998 were part- time.
- New developments in information technologies and ways of working require new skills.
- Studies confirm that more education is generally linked to a lower rate of unemployment for any group of working people.

2. Basic skills are the gateway to further workplace training

- Further workplace training is often done through computers and information technology, or requires high basic skills. Many jobs now demand that workers use computers. Basic skills are often an essential first step.
- Surveys indicate that workers who have more education receive more workplace training. This means that union members who have less formal education are often excluded from employer-provided training. Unions have to fight against this bias and for programs that ensure all members have access to training.
- Many older union members and some younger ones left school early or have skills they've rarely had the chance to use. Their basic skills may need upgrading.
- Many unions have a high percentage of new Canadian members whose first language is neither English nor French. Immigrant workers often have difficulty with official language reading, writing and communication skills, although they may be highly literate in. their mother tongue.

3. Skills for job security and portability

Union basic skills programs can give members greater job security and greater portability of job skills by:

- Providing members with the skills to pass licensing or certification tests.
- Equipping members to take advantage of other training programs offered by the employer and/or the union in the workplace.
- Giving members the foundation to access further education outside the workplace.

4. Literacy programs build the union

The basic goals and activities of unions - organizing new workers, fighting for economic and social justice, and collective bargaining - require good literacy and communication skills. Unions cannot reach all of their members through documents and leaf lets if some members cannot read or understand written documents well. Even those who can read well need clear language.

Literacy and basic skills programs can be important tools for building unions by:

- Involving a new group of members in a union activity. Often members are marginalized because they do not have the necessary literacy or communication skills to fully participate in the work of the union.
- Opening the door to union education programs. Many members may want to participate in union education programs but feel intimidated by their lack of basic skills. Union literacy programs can give them the confidence that comes from a supportive learning experience.
- The union's awareness of literacy can help it become more conscious of the need for its practices and communications to be more accessible to its members.

5. Cut-backs and closures of college and school board programs

Because of this situation, more unions are putting training and education on their bargaining agendas. This doe snot mean that unions have stopped fighting for improved public education. On the contrary, we are on the front lines of defending public education.

Moreover, in many cases we can use resources negotiated with employers to fund training programs that use the public education system.

6. Union-negotiated literacy programs are an alternative to the corporate agenda

Education and training are not neutral. Generally, employers see training as away to increase productivity and improve the bottom line. Basic skills can be misused as away to push corporate values of competitiveness and the employer's view of "team-work."

Employer-only programs tend to leave out the union. They paint a picture of a workplace where the union and the rights of workers are barely visible.

A basic skills program should integrate union values and goals. It should help workers develop a critical perspective on the nature of our society and its institutions. It should help them feel more confident about asking questions and standing up for themselves.

Unions have to take up the agenda on literacy and develop their own programs. They can and should bargain for control over the curriculum. They should ensure that while members learn basic skills, they are also learning about their unions and about the politics of the workplace and society.

SECTION 2

Worker-centred learning

A worker-centred approach means that the program is rooted in the needs of the workers, the learners. Their needs determine how the program is designed, what it offers, and how it is taught.

Worker-centred learning enables workers to have more control over their lives and jobs.

The objective of a union literacy program is to empower its participants. Programs promote union values like fairness, solidarity, and community. While building on their literacy skills,members also learn about their individual and collective rights. A worker-centred approach builds confidence and self-esteem. It strengthens the role participants play in the union, in the workplace, and in society.

Worker-centred learning builds on what workers already know.

Participants build on their strengths rather than focus on their deficiencies. This approach recognizes that everyone who takes part in a literacy program brings skills and knowledge to the class. It also recognizes the learner and the instructor as equals, working and learning together. A worker-centred approach affirms the importance of the participants' life experience and recognizes how it contributes to what it means to be literate.

Worker-centred learning addresses the needs of the whole person.

Worker-centred learning looks at the individual's total needs. It is not solely guided by the needs of the learner as a worker. The goal is to enrich the lives of the learners and expand their potential not only as workers but as individuals, union members, family members and citizens.

Worker-centred learning is developmental.

A literacy program that is worker-centred is not limited to building skills for a particular job. It approaches literacy in its broadest sense and is rooted in the varied interests of the learner. It is a program that embraces life-long learning by opening the door to further education and training opportunities.

Worker-centred learning reflects the diverse learning styles and needs of adult workers.

The curriculum content and program structure respect different adult learning styles and are sensitive to the participants' race, ethnicity, gender and culture. Cross-cultural understanding and anti-racism are explored as workers take an active role in setting their own educational goals. The curriculum flows from these diverse needs and backgrounds.

Worker-centred programs involve workers in decision-making.

The worker-centred approach counts on workers to be active participants in planning the program and in the decisions that affect its design and content.

Worker-centred learning looks to integrate literacy training with other aspects of workplace training.

Literacy is not a stand alone issue. A worker-centred program needs to be integrated into a larger strategy for training that responds to current and anticipated changes in the workplace.

Worker-centred programs assure confidentiality.

Individual needs assessments and classroom records are confidential. Participants are assured that their privacy will be respected and that their employer will not have access to information about their individual progress in the course.

Worker-centred programs are open to all.

Access to training is equitable. That means that the program is open to all members of the union, regardless of their skill level,job classification, physical activity, seniority, gender, or race. Priority access is sometimes determined by addressing particular barriers, like serving participants with the greatest need first.

Worker-centred programs are accessible.

Barriers to access are actively uncovered, identified and addressed. Every effort is made to facilitate attendance by addressing issues like family responsibility and transportation. Programs are given at times and in places that are convenient to workers and their busy lives. Access also means that programs are free of charge.

SECTION 3
Planning for bargaining

STAGE ONE: LEARNING ABOUT YOUR EMPLOYER AND YOUR MEMBERS

1. Getting started: who will take on the job?

Bringing in a literacy program requires planning and organization. The union must do its homework with the membership long before putting a demand on the bargaining table.

First, decide who will have the responsibility for exploring work on basic skills. Is it an already existing committee, such as the education committee, or a new body? Is it the executive, or someone who is designated to take on the job?

Those who take on the job should do their homework:

- Read the CLC *Learning in Solidarity* series of handbooks on literacy and basic skills, in particular *Learning for Our Lives: A Union Guide to Worker-Centred Literacy,* 2000.
- Attend a CLC or affiliate course on training or union-based literacy.
- Find out what your members need so that the union is better placed to decide what kind of program it wants to bargain.

Where to get help

- Use the resources of your own union first. Some unions and locals have an education and training committee which can take on the added responsibility for this area of work. Many unions can also get help from their national or district office, or from a central education committee.
- Some provincial federations have literacy projects in place.
- The CLC Workplace Literacy Coordinator is available to help you.

2. Research your workplace and your members' training needs.

The Employer and the Workplace Survey

You need to have an idea of where your employer is going so that you can put your members' needs into perspective.

- How is the employer doing overall?
- *For the private sector:*
  What is the situation of profit and loss over the last few years?
  For the public sector:
  How has the budget for your institution changed over the last few years?
- *For the private sector:*
  What about changes in the value of shares?
  For the public sector:
  What about changes in the importance government or the employer has assigned your workplace?
- Is the employer expanding, cutting back, or stable? For example, in the private sector, what is happening in terms of buying other industries, mergers, opening or closing lines or departments, contracting out, etc.?
- Who are the important competitors for your product or service?
- What are the employer's future plans?
- How does your workplace fit into the employer's overall pattern?
- What does the future look like for workers and unions with this employer?
- What about training? Do other employers or departments in the same sector or community offer training or basic skills programs?
- How do you think your employer would react to a proposal for a basic skills program?

An informal assessment of members' needs

This is an informal survey which you might conduct with your committee (union executive, education committee) or literacy co-ordinator. The purpose of the survey is to take a preliminary look at the members' needs before proceeding with a wider member survey or focus group.

Try to answer these questions:

1. Overall, has your workplace gone through major or minor changes in the last few years? If major, what kind?

2. How stable is your industry? Will the same product or service be needed in the next 5, 10, 20 years?

3. How stable is your plant or workplace?

4. How is the nature of work changing in your workplace?

5. Do jobs now require more, less, or different skills than before?

6. What kind of education was required for various jobs in the past? Is this changing?

7. What is the average age and seniority of your workforce?

8. What kind of skills are most needed by your members?
   - Literacy and numeracy skills
     - ☐ Yes
     - ☐ No
   - Computer skills
     - ☐ Yes
     - ☐ No
   - Job specific skills
     - ☐ Yes
     - ☐ No
   - Certification and licensing
     - ☐ Yes
     - ☐ No
   - Trades and apprenticeships
     - ☐ Yes
     - ☐ No
   - High School Leaving (Grade 12)
     - ☐ Yes
     - ☐ No
   - General Educational Diploma (GED)
     - ☐ Yes
     - ☐ No
   - College or university degrees
     - ☐ Yes
     - ☐ No
   - Other, please specify:
     - ☐ Yes
     - ☐ No

9. What type of training might be needed in the future?

10. Does the collective agreement include training and/or education provisions? If yes what are these provisions? Are they adequate?

11. Does the employer do training outside of collective agreement provisions?

12. What kind of training is it? Who gets it? Who does not get it?

13. Does your membership have the basic skills needed to access training and new jobs?

14. How would your members' skills rate if they had to move to anew job in your workplace, or look for work else where in the event of a lay-off or closure?

Consulting the members

You must find out just how widespread the need is for basic skills training in your union. This may be done in a number of ways:

- By surveying all or part of the membership.
- By setting up focus groups which are representative of the membership.
- By surveying needs through shop stewards.

In any survey you conduct, you must ensure confidentiality. The members must feel they can talk to the union about basic skills without fear of exposure or reprisal. Basic skills and literacy are very personal issues. Information that gets back to the employer could jeopardize a member's job.

The membership survey

- To set up the survey, work through your education or training committee, if one already exists.
- Get help from the national or district office of your union, or a local college or university instructor familiar with survey techniques. Seek their advice on how to do surveys. Make the survey as easy to answer as possible.
- Make your survey short, and the language clear. Rely mainly on multiple choice techniques. (See Sample Members' Survey at the end of this section.)
- If necessary, translate your survey into the languages spoken by your membership.

Focus groups

A focus group is set up by gathering together a representative group of members.

- Assign someone from your committee to facilitate the discussion and someone else to record the meeting (if participants agree), or to take notes and type them.
- Discuss what life is like at work: What are the needs of the membership? What could training do to help?
- If needed, set up focus groups in languages other than English or French.

Shop steward survey

If organizing focus groups is too difficult, get your shop stewards to survey the membership in their department or area and answer these questions:

- What is the education level of members in each department?
- How many have a high school completion level of reading, writing and math skills?
- How many workers have difficulty with English or French because it is not their first language?
- What are the working conditions, such as shift rotation and work locations?
- What kind of program, delivery method and scheduling would best encourage the widest participation?

Naming the program

An important issue is to find a name for the program. Some people may be intimidated by having the word "literacy" in the name. So why not choose something catchy. Acronyms, or words whose letters stand for others words, such as BEST (Basic Education for Skill sTraining) are a Canadian tradition. We also have LEAP (Learning and Education Assisted by Peers) and JUMP (Joint Union Management Program). The only limit is your imagination.

SAMPLE MEMBERS' SURVEY

This survey should be modified to suit your membership.

Part 1: Tell us about yourself

1.
☐ Female ☐ Male

2. Age:
☐ 16-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56-65
☐ Over 65

3. My first language spoken is:
☐ English ☐ French
☐ Other (Please specify)

4.
☐ I was born in Canada
☐ I was born in (Please name country)

5. Union and Local

6. Department

7. City

8. Are you elected to a union position?
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ If so, please specify

9. Would you describe your job as:
☐ Assembly ☐ Skilled trades ☐ Maintence ☐ Office work
☐ Shipping ☐ Service ☐ Other (pleaser specify)

10. My last level of school finished was:
☐ Elementary ☐ Some high school
☐ Grade 12/High School completion ☐ Some college
☐ College certificate ☐ Some university
☐ University degree

11. I completed the above schooling in:
☐ Canada ☐ Outside of Canada ☐ Some outside, some inside

12. I was educated in:
☐ English ☐ French ☐ Other

Part 2: Tell us about your skills

1. I consider my English speaking skills to be:
☐ limited ☐ ok ☐ good ☐ very good ☐ excellent

2. I consider my English reading skills to be:
☐ limited ☐ ok ☐ good ☐ very good ☐ excellent

3. I consider my English writing skills to be:
☐ limited ☐ ok ☐ good ☐ very good ☐ excellent

4. I consider my math and numeracy skills to be:
☐ limited ☐ ok ☐ good ☐ very good ☐ excellent

Part 3: Tell us about your interests

1. Would you be interested in taking courses in a union-organized program?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

2. I do not need basic skills but would be interested in being trained as an instructor.
☐ Yes ☐ No

3. I would like to take courses in:
- Effective reading and writing skills:
☐ Yes ☐ No
- Effective math skills:
☐ Yes ☐ No
- English as a Second Language (ESL):
☐ Yes ☐ No
- Computer skills:
☐ Yes ☐ No
- Trades and apprenticeships:
☐ Yes ☐ No
- Preparation for certification or licensing:
☐ Yes ☐ No
- High School Completion (Grade 12):
☐ Yes ☐ No
- General Educational Diploma (GED):
☐ Yes ☐ No
- College or university courses:
☐ Yes ☐ No
- Other
☐ Yes ☐ No

please specify

4. I would like to be able to take courses during work hours (if lost time is paid)
- I would like to be able to take courses before or after work:

☐ Yes ☐ No

- I need help with childcare to take courses:

☐ Yes ☐ No

- I need help with transportation to take courses:

☐ Yes ☐ No

- I need help with (other) to take courses:

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. My regular shift is

6. The course should be given:
- at the workplace:

☐ Yes ☐ No

- in the union local/centre:

☐ Yes ☐ No

- at the community college or school:

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Get information from your union and federations on basic skills training.

Seek help and advice from:

- Your union's education department.
- Another local with a successful program.
- A CLC or federation of labour education or literacy co-ordinator.
- Read about the basic skills programs of other locals and unions.

4. Keep the leadership, the bargaining committee and, above all, the membership informed during this stage. Build consensus about trying to start a program.

Once you have some idea of the extent of your members' literacy needs, hold a meeting of those involved with the issue to talk about ways to build strong membership support for a program.

It is not enough to gain the support of members who need basic skills programs. You also need the support of union leaders and members who don't need these programs.

Try to develop a positive union culture around basic skills training. Many members might not immediately see the benefits of the union becoming involved.

Here are someways to raise the level of awareness and support for basic skills training in the union:

- Write articles for the union newspaper.
- Post information on the union website.
- Put the issue on the agenda at regular membership meetings and bring it up at important committee meetings.
- Get the message across that basic skills programs benefit more than he members who participate in them; they strengthen the whole union.
- Link basic skills programs to other aspects of training and labour education.

Should you tell the employer?

Should you sound out the employer on a basic skills program a head of time? What is the best time if you decide "yes"? Should you wait until the program is more clearly defined?

The answers to these questions depend on the labour-management climate in your workplace. It is a judgement call and your local union is best positioned to make it.

Keep in mind that if you are raising basic skills training at public meetings or in your news letter, the employer will probably find out anyway.

STAGE TWO: DRAFTING A PROPOSAL

The chart below will help you sort out your members' priorities and boil down the preliminary work you have done into a set of simple proposals. Your program should reflect the areas you identify in the chart. But don't worry if you can't fit them all in. The model clauses at the back of this handbook show that few collective agreement provisions on basic skills training cover all the aspects included in a comprehensive program. But they are important steps along the way.

Wants, Needs and Expectations

Part 1: Make your list

One way to get an overall perspective is to list your wants, needs and expectations for the program. Wants are all the items you would like to have in your program - your wish list! Needs are all the items from the first list that you absolutely need in order to have a successful program. Expectations are the items you think you can reach agreement on with the employer. Rank each of your union's wants, needs and expectations in terms of "absolutely must have", "important", "can live without." Once you know your priorities, you should be able to form the core of your proposal.

	Absolutely must have	Important to have	Would like to have, but can live without
Wants (your wish list)			
Needs (what is key to make things work)			
Expectations (what time employer might agree to)			

Part 2: Anticipate the employer's position

Try an exercise in role playing. Have someone play the part of the employer. Someone else should interview the employer about literacy- what does the employer want? Now fill in the above chart again, this time from the employer's point of view.

The Elements of a Proposal

1. The type of program: stand-alone or part of a larger training or education strategy?

Choosing the type of program that is best for your union may depend on whether your union already has a training strategy or training language in its collective agreement. This issue should be discussed with your local leadership and regional or national leadership.

2. Control: a union-controlled program or a joint program?

A union-run program: this is the ideal way to go. Union-run programs give the union control over the delivery model, content, design and administration. The union negotiates with the employer for some form of funding which is then used to establish and run the program.

Joint programs: many employers will only agree to support training if the program is jointly run. At a minimum, unions must have a truly equal say in any joint program (co-determination). This means the union has an equal say or a veto over what goes on. The union must ensure that it has a truly equal say in any joint program. Unions should try to gain as much autonomy as possible in terms of design and content, as well as program administration.

Avoid, at all costs, employer-run training programs. If companies make all the decisions and call the shots, much of the reason for unions becoming involved is lost. Workers will likely feel threatened about the employer's motivation for offering such a program.

3. Delivery: what kind of relationship with public education? Who will deliver the courses?

- What will the role of the public education system be in your situation?
- Have you contacted the local school board or college instructors' union?
- How will the instructors be selected and trained?
- Will peer tutors have a role?

4. Content: What makes up the program?

It is critical to bargain the content of basic skills programs. Content should never be left to the employer alone to determine.

Guaranteeing at least joint control over curriculum can help ensure that program content will be labour positive, worker-centred and recognize the worker as a whole person with a wide range of responsibilities.

An exciting aspect of basic skills programming is that skills can develop using any thematic content that is relevant to the participants.

Content areas can include:

- Communications within the social structures at work, in the union, at home and in the community
- Union values and history
- Critical thinking and social responsibility
- The environment
- Human rights (gender, race, disability, aboriginal rights, sexual preference, ethnicity and religion)
- The economy

5. Participation: determining who can attend.

- What is the upper limit of the number of participants?
- How can you ensure the numbers are fair?
- How will it be decided who attends the program (if there are more applicants than places) and who gets put on a waiting list? Ideally, those with the greatest need should have priority, but this needs to be reconciled with operational requirements.
- How do you ensure that all sectors are represented?

6. The work cycle: how to access programs at different parts of the cycle

Many collective agreements provide access to basic skills programs only at a time of lay-off or other major job disruption. Workers need on going access to basic skills programs. The union should try to ensure that the collective agreement provides access to programs:

- During the course of regular employment.
- As part of apprenticeship programs.
- As part of upgrading programs.
- As part of lay-off or workplace closure programs.
- As part of a further education program.
- As part of a computer skills program.
- As part of a sabbatical or educational leave program.

7. Logistics: when and where should training be given?

It's important to include some idea of when and where the program will be delivered in your proposal. Give careful consideration to the location and times to ensure maximum participation.

- Take into account the needs of workers on different or rotating shifts. You might have to offer the program more than once a day to deal with shift changes.
- Delivery of the program in a location that is not private or is inconvenient may act as a barrier to attendance.
- Offering a program in the evenings or after work may prevent many women and some men from attending unless there is help with child care and transportation.
- Offering a program which conflicts with overtime may lead to a poor turnout.

8. What about educational technology?

In today's workplace, the ability to use computers is becoming an essential skill.

- Don't limit or base literacy training solely on computers. If you do, social interaction and the important dynamic of group learning will be lost. Students still need access to the knowledge contained in books and other printed material that is not available on the Internet and computers.
- Learning about computers and learning with computers can build upon basic skills and literacy programs. But computers must not replace the human instructor.
- Some unions are experimenting with using computers as part of their programs. This may be something you want to build into your program.
- Many workers may be attracted to a basic skills program which also allows them to learn something about computers.
- Workers should have access to the best in technology. Make sure your equipment and programs are up to date.
- Don't let literacy and basic skills take aback seat to computer training. Participants must be able to upgrade their reading and writing skills, not just their computer ability.

9. Who will pay? How?

Each basic skills program must include a funding arrangement. The funding formula should be related to the present circumstances of your union and be influenced by the culture of your workplace and your union around funding issues.

Your union might also want to consider getting project money from a government program to help deliver or plan out its basic skills education. Please refer to *What Unions Should Know About Getting the Money for Literacy and Basic Skills Programs* (1998) for some ideas.

There are several ways to negotiate financing and other provisions for participation in union programs:

- In a collective agreement.
- Through a letter of understanding in a collective agreement.
- Through a separate arrangement with the employer.

Different ways to fund training

• *Cents per hour*

The employer contributes so many cents per hour worked by an employee into a trust fund which is either administered separately by In some cases, a portion of the union or jointly with the employer(s). the cents per hour goes to the national or district union office to deal with overall training needs.

• *Hours of training per employee*

The union negotiates the delivery of so many hours of training per employee per year. For example, 40 hours of training per employee per year is the recognized CLC goal. These hours are then calculated as a total dollar amount. This amount can vary according to the number of employees on the payroll in anyone year.

• *Percentage of payroll*

Some unions negotiate a percentage of the overall payroll for education and training purposes.

• *Leave programs*

These programs support union members during extended absences for educational purposes.

Some unions have negotiated paid, partially paid or unpaid leave for members who return to school. Union members should continue to have all their rights maintained when they return to work. In all cases, the employer should pay for a replacement worker while the employee is absent.

• *Tuition advances, rebates or loan programs*

These cover tuition fees and, in some cases,related expenses such as books for members who elect to take courses. Tuition advances which cover costs up front are preferable to the more standard coverage of course fees only upon successful completion .Usually these provisions cover college and university courses, but they should cover all kinds of public education courses.

• *Paid time for training*

Many workers are unable to take training that is not included as part of the work day and paid by the employer. Child care arrangements, family obligations, transportation and fatigue often make it difficult for workers to participate in training that is not employer-supported. Managers are rarely, if ever, asked to attend training on personal time. Why should unions accept a double standard for workers?

There also needs to be money for replacement of workers in training so that they can participate in classes effectively.Co-workers who are not taking basic skills are more likely to support training if their own workloads aren't heavier.

There are also ways to get funding through programs that are either run outside of the local or which integrate basic skills into other training:

• *Sector council programs*

Some unions have negotiated programs through a sector council (a joint employer-union body for an industry). The sector council pays for the training. Unions can negotiate a contribution from employers through a sector council.

• *Basic skills in union paid educational leave programs*

This allows union members to leave work to take union education. Paid union education leave allows unions to train a core of activists. Because literacy can be the foundation for labour education, these programs sometimes include basic skills.

• *Basic skills in apprenticeship and adjustment programs*

Sometimes, funding for basic skills can be included within apprenticeship programs for those already working for the employer. In adjustment programs, literacy is often a key element for many workers who must re-enter the labour market after many years in a steady job that gave them little opportunity to use their basic skills.

Here are some questions to consider about financing (see chart on next page):

- How much will this method provide in total training funding?
- How and when will the funding be passed onto the union if the employer controls the collection?
- Does this method benefit some members more than others?
- Who controls the funds?
- Who determines the content and delivery of the training?
- Are there conditions or limits on when and on what the money can be spent?

	Cents per hour	Hours of training per employee	Percentage of payroll	Leave programs	Tuition advances rebates or loan programs	Paid time for training	Sector council programs
How much does this method provide in total training funding?							
How and when will the funding be password on to the union if the employer controls the collection?							
Does this method benefit some members more than other?							
Who controls the funds?							
Who determines the content and delivery of the training?							
Are there conditions or limits on when and on what the money can be spent?							

10. Cost it out: preparing a rough budget

In the end, much of collective bargaining comes down to dollars and cents. You have to know how much it will cost to deliver your program. And that means including all the details.

Item	Budget
How many participants? Your program may grow, but how many students will you have in the first year? what is the cost of paid work time for the anticipated number of participants?	
What are the costs of paid work time for the peer tutors?	
How many hours of instruction will there be and at what cost per hour? (You might want to check with a college or school board and get some costs for instruction.)	
What are the costs associated with doing a program in partnership with a college or board of education?	
Other costs are associated with delivering a program:	
- administrative support	
- mailings	
- advertising	
- teaching materials	
- field trips	
- books and supplies	
- room rentals	
- support for child care	
- transportation	
Grand Total	
If you know already, what is the total sum of money available for you program?	
Difference	

11. Know the range of options for securing this program.

- Collective agreement language on basic skills/literacy, or on training or education. Some contract language can be found at the back of this handbook. Bargaining basic skills into your collective agreement is more permanent and sets a precedent for future contracts.
- A letter of understanding in the collective agreement. This can be used when an employer is not prepared to agree to a permanent program.
- A written commitment from the employer outside of the collective agreement. This is the loosest form of employer commitment, but is useful if you are bargaining outside of collective agreement time lines.

12. How will the program be administered?

- a joint committee
- a union committee
- do you need a co-ordinator to administer the program even for a few hours a week?

13. Elements of a joint committee

If part of your proposal to your union and the employer includes the formation of a joint committee on training and/or education, it is important that you determine from the start:

- *The mandate, structure, responsibilities and role of a joint committee:*
  - The union must have an equal say on the committee. This is called co-determination.
  - The committee should have a mandate to examine all aspects of training in the workplace which concern the union.
  - The committee should have control over the training budget.
  - The committee should have to publish a regular report on what is being done on training.
- *Strategies for positioning the union on the joint committee:*
  - The union has to take the initiative on the committee. Sitting back and waiting for the employer to act is not a good strategy.
  - The union should bring positive training experiences from other workplaces to the attention of the committee.
  - The union can demand that part of the training budget be used for union-directed programs in much the same way as the employer will use some of the budget for management programs.
- *Training and on going support for union reps on joint committees, preferably during working hours. The union should:*
  - Train its reps on the committee.
  - Hold regular union-only meetings for its reps.
  - Hold a regular annual strategy session to decide on overall policy and direction.
  - Have regular times for the union reps to meet with the whole local on training.
- *Maximizing accountability between union reps on joint committees and the local. The unions representatives on the joint committee should:*
  - Be elected to the committee for a specified term so they enjoy membership confidence.
  - Be required to prepare a plan of what they are going to do and present it to the executive and the local for input.
  - Take difficult issues back to the executive and the local for discussion.
  - Make regular reports at meetings and in the news letter to the whole membership.

14. How will you monitor and evaluate the program?

Your proposal should have a mechanism for evaluating and reviewing the program. Monitoring and reviewing are crucial, especially for a joint program.

- What are the criteria for success?
- Who judges whether the program is successful or not?
- When and how often will a review be conducted?

15. Bringing the proposal back to the union.

Your written proposal should be brought back to the union. It should go through your education committee, your executive committee, before a membership meeting and before it goes to the bargaining committee. In this way, your proposal can be fine tuned and ownership built on the part of the membership and leadership.

16. Draft some contract language.

You will need to draft some contract language to accompany your proposal.

- Use some of the clauses in the back of this handbook for reference.
- Use clear, understandable language (see CLC resource, *Making It Clear: Clear Language for Union Communications*, 1999). This is always important in a collective agreement, and especially so in provisions around basic skills programs.

STAGE THREE: DIFFERENT VIEWS OF LITERACYAND BASIC SKILLS FROM EMPLOYERS AND UNIONS

This section contains some of the main arguments on basic skills. Familiarize yourself with these arguments, and note any others you've heard around your workplace or can think of.

Employer arguments

For many employers, literacy and basic skills programs are only important if they contribute to increasing the bottom line of corporate profits. Keep this agenda in mind when the employer resists literacy and basic skills programs.

Why some employers may resist basic skills programs

- I need employees who have job skills to work my machines. They don't need basic skills to do their jobs.
- I'm all in favour of literacy. But if someone wants to learn to read better, there are programs out there in the schools and colleges. This is an individual issue. Employers don't have to get involved. I went back to school and took my MBA five years ago. So why can't other people?
- This is just another union program where all the employees will do is learn what is bad about the employer.
- I don't need a program in my workplace. All my employees have to have at least Grade 12 before I hire them.
- I need upgrading for my employees so they can use computers. What do basic skills have to do with computers?

Here are different versions of the argument that "too much education can be a dangerous thing."

- If my workers become too educated or literate they'll get jobs elsewhere. I don't want to train workers for other employers.

These next three are not usually openly stated:

- If the workers become too educated or too literate, they'll begin to question the employer more.
- It's advantageous to keep workers who speak different languages in their separate groups. If all the workers can communicate better with each other then they can band together against me.

- If word about a literacy program gets out, some clients might not want to buy products made by workers who they think are less educated.

Why employers may favour basic skills programs.

- I need literacy programs to help my employees read instructions and fill out reports. Mistakes due to poor reading skills can cost a lot of time and money in lost production.
- Workers who are more literate have better communications skills to deal ably with supervisors, customers, other employees and the public.
- It makes sense for me to invest in the workers I already have. Literacy training can build a foundation for future training and education inside and outside of the workplace. Offering basic skills will be the basis of a whole set of training programs, as well as access to further education.
- The more chances I give for education advancement, the more employees will want to stay with my company.
- I'll get a reputation as a model employer who trains employees and will attract the best people to work here.
- I want to do my share so that my company is seen as a good corporate citizen in the community.
- Funding a basic skills program will help build bridges to the union.
- If we want to keep our WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) costs down and maintain a good health and safety record, we have to make sure nobody has an accident because they were having difficulty reading instructions.
- I have a large number of immigrant employees who don't speak English (or French) that well. This program could help our employees integrate better into our company and into Canadian society.

Union arguments

For the union, basic skills are part of a much wider program of worker- centred education and union building.

Why union members want basic skills programs.

- I need better communications skills to deal with my co-workers. I want to be better able to express my ideas to supervisors, customers, and the public. Better skills will help me understand what is happening in the workplace. I can participate fully in working life.
- Improving my skills will help build my confidence.
- Now I can help my children with their homework and read them stories. I can do my own income taxes too. I went to "meet the teacher" night for the first time.
- Improving my skills helps me to know what's going on in my union. Now I can read the union newsletter, understand the collective agreement and participate in union activities. In the classes, I am learning more about the union and how it works.
- This program means I can think about taking some future training and education. I feel I am in better shape now to keep my job or look for a new one.
- Better skills help me to participate more fully in my community. I can participate in community activities because now I better understand what is happening.
- Participating in workplace education was the first step for me to take a course in steward's training with my union.

Why some union members have to be convinced to support union basic skills programs.

- Why should the union be pushing for a program which only helps a minority of our members? What do I get out of it? I know how to read and write pretty well.
- These programs are okay, but why isn't the employer providing them?
- Sure I have some difficulties reading, but I'm getting old. It's been too long since I left school and it wasn't so great in the first place. Besides, I will be retiring soon.
- We have a public education system and members should get their classes there.

Why unions should support basic skills.

- We need to reach out to those union members who are not yet active in the union. Lack of basic skills is a major barrier to participation. Having a positive union-based learning experience can encourage members to get involved.
- The union is seen to be providing a much needed and valuable service to our members.
- Participating in a workplace literacy program can help us better understand what is happening in the workplace. For example, it can help our members gain a thorough understanding of health and safety Issues.
- Through these programs, members can also learn some of the basics about our union and how it works. If they know what is happening, then they are more likely to get involved. Everyone benefits when our local becomes more democratic and active.
- Higher levels of literacy and basic skills lead to better membership understanding of written union material. Members also feel more confident participating in writing union material.
- The whole union gains when a group of people who have had difficulty participating get the tools to play a role in union activities.
- The union gains by having a chance to shape the program and use it to introduce many new members to the union, its role, its history and its values.
- If we don't help shape this program, the employer will, and the programs will be used to push the employer's ideas and values.

STAGE FOUR: INSIDE THE NEGOTIATIONS

1. Choose your negotiator.

Decide who will present this proposal to the employer. It could be your local president, your chief negotiator, a staff representative, a representative of your education committee or someone chosen just for this task.

Whom you choose will also depend on whether you are negotiating the program as part of regular collective bargaining or as a separate bargaining process between collective agreements.

If the spokes person was not involved in writing the proposal, make sure s/he is well briefed on the issues. Be sure the person has adequate time to prepare. Consider doing some bargaining role playing as part of the preparation.

2. Do your homework.

Be prepared. Have facts, figures and arguments handy:

- Survey or focus group results.
- Costings of the program.
- Your answers to anticipated employer questions and arguments (see section on employers' arguments).
- Exhibits demonstrating your needs, what's in it for the union and for the employer, and how many other workplaces have similar successful programs. These exhibits could include the results of a survey, feedback from a union meeting, or testimonials from other unions, members and companies about successful literacy programs. It will be particularly important to show examples of employers in your community and/or within the same sector who are successfully involved in workplace literacy programs.

3. In the bargaining hot seat.

Have your story straight:

- Say what you want, why you want it and what it will cost.
- Articulate a clear answer of what is in it for the employer and the union.
- Present your exhibits.
- Have copies of exhibits and collective agreement language.

Show that you know a great deal- even more than the employer - about the literacy and basic skills needs of the work force.

Deal with the employer's resistance strategically. Anticipate the employer's objections and incorporate answers to the most important ones in your presentation. (Note: this approach can backfire if you have not prepared good answers.)

Get your foot in the door. You might not get everything you want the first time around. But it's important to at least put your education program in place. You can better it in future rounds of bargaining.

For example, one union started with a three cent per hour levy for training per employee. Through subsequent agreements, the union has now been able to raise the levy to twenty cents per hour per employee.

Lock up the language. If you have language prepared, then use it as a starting position. Make sure you have a good sense of what the union's bottom line is. But do not leave the table until all the "i"s are dotted and all the "t"s crossed.

Added at closing. Literacy is unlikely to be the central issue in your union's bargaining. That means it may not be possible to reach agreement on it early. It might be more possible to add it to a final settlement as the deal is taking shape.

STAGE FIVE: KEEPING THE MEMBERSHIP INFORMED AND CONTINUOUS BARGAINING

You should keep the members informed throughout the process. They need to know what they have won, or why you had to settle for less or drop the demand entirely.

Even if you do not win a program at the formal bargaining table, it may be possible to win it in another forum after the ink is dry on the agreement.

If you did win, get ready for what is sometimes referred to as "continuous bargaining." There might be more negotiating trying to get the program up and running than there was in winning it.

An on going joint labour-management forum where decisions about setting up and running the program will need to continue or be established once the formal negotiations are completed. It will be critical to the success of your program that the structure, representation, authority and working processes of this forum ensure that the union is truly an equal partner in this endeavour.

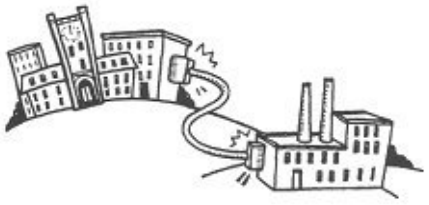
SECTION 4

Basic skills and public education

The CLC believes that the public education system should be the primary and preferred means of training delivery. The Congress has developed a policy and a *Protocol on the Delivery of Training, Education and Employment Services* (The CLC Executive Council adopted this in June, 1998.)The Protocol says:

> We believe that public institutions should be the primary deliverer and preferred means of training, education and employment services. Funds must be made available to ensure the continuing strength of public education institutions and government programs in these areas.

Building Partnerships with Colleges and School Boards



To link your basic skills program with public education, contact the public education instructors' unions in your area. They are the key link between your union and the community colleges and school boards.

Many unions have facilities where they have developed their own models for delivering training. Some building trades unions have been active in training for over 150 years. Unions representing college and school board instructors have only just begun to develop links with unions which need literacy programs. These links are a crucial part of developing successful partnerships.

Developing a partnership between a union-negotiated program and a public education institution is not always easy. Public institutions have to become more attuned to the needs of unions. Unions want flexibility from colleges and boards about when and where programs are delivered, labour content of programs, the costs and who does the teaching. Many unions view peer instructors as an essential part of any program.

Here are some examples of union links with public education:

- Using an existing college or school board program delivered in a union or workplace environment.
- Negotiating adaptations to a public program.
- Using community college or school board to help deliver a union- designed program. For example, some unions with their own training facilities use college or school board instructors to partner with union peer instructors in delivering their program.
- Accreditation by a community college of a union-delivered program. This requires an agreement with a public board or community college to recognize the courses for credit in the public programs.
- Setting up a new joint partnership with a public program or institution. This new joint body would hire staff to deliver the program.
- Using a community college to administer the program and train union instructors.

- Giving students the opportunity to link into the public education system and pursue further goals such as high school completion or GED and/or pursue college and university programs.

Unions have to fight to maintain and expand public schools, colleges and universities, particularly for programs like adult basic education. At the same time, labour educators and peer or union member instructors play an important role in literacy and basic skills programs. Union educators can create a critical bridge between union programs and those offered by community colleges and school boards.

SECTION 5

Where are we at? - stories from the front lines

UNITE IN WINNIPEG: GARMENT WORKERS LEARN NEW SKILLS

In 1994,UNITE local 459 started a project called "Communication Barriers to Union Practice." The project was undertaken in partnership with the Manitoba Federation of Labour and the joint employer-union-government Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee. This project was aimed at helping a largely immigrant workforce in the garment trade gain better basic skills to help them participate in the union.

A payroll percentage for training had been in place since the early 1990s. UNITE had negotiated cents per hour contributions from employers in the area into an education and research fund solely administered by the union. The fund now accesses some $110,000 per year.

The local also had a resolution adopted at the UNITE Canadian conference supporting a union role in literacy and ESL/FSL (English as a Second Language, French as a Second Language). UNITE went onto receive National Literacy Secretariat funding for a research project on membership needs in this area.

As a result of these initiatives, the local set up The Learning Experience Centre in Winnipeg. The Learning Centre currently has about 70 students in different courses. One course is the Integrated Learning Program, where participants use computers to learn better reading, writing and computer skills. The program is particularly geared to an ethnically diverse workforce and involves family members and friends of the workers. This opens up new possibilities for reaching workers who are not in unions. A women's committee ensures that the needs of women workers are given attention. The program offers GED as well as computer skills.

The poem at right was written by Florence Marquez, from Winnipeg, Manitoba. Florencia, or Florence, Marquez is the President of UNITE Local 459. In 1973, she came to Canada from the Philippines with her family and began working in the apparel industry in 1977. Along time union activist, she took advanced conversational English and Integrated Learning at the Learning Experience Centre.

CHILD LABOUR AND STOLEN DREAMS

by Florence Marquez, UNITE Local 459, Winnipeg

Some children in the third world, are all out there
Struggling at work, so they can share
The fruits of their labour, with families they love and care
To live with dignity, even if they have to suffer
The dreams, they dreamt have been stolen
'Twas taken from them, when they started working
For companies and sweat shops, who do not care for them
But only for profits and personal gains
The children lost their childhood, along the way
The laughter we used to hear, when they are at play
The education they must obtain, as young adults today
So they can face the world with honour and dignity.
For mistakes they've made, they're punished severely
Leaving them under the sun, to burn for the whole day
They're young and helpless children, who need love and security
So let's protect them now, from abuses and slavery
Let's give them back their dreams, that was meant to be
Through training, education and the Union way
May they live their lives to the fullest today
With brighter future, good health and most of all they're free

LEAP AND JUMP KEEP THINGS HOPPING

In 1998,the Communications, Energy and Paper workers Union of Canada (CEP) and the Pulp, Paper and Wood workers of Canada (PPWC) launched the Learning and Education Assisted by Peers (LEAP) program at four sites in British Columbia. LEAP is a project of the Joint Union Management Program (JUMP), a program funded by the B.C. Forest Renewal Program. Forest Renewal receives its funding from a tax levy on stumpage fees paid by employers.

Employers initially believed that LEAP would not work because Grade 12 is the requirement for hiring in the forest industry. The training is largely done on the worker's own time. Workers can pursue other goals at the community college level after going through the program.

Robert Wedel -an Adult Basic Education Instructor from Capilano College and member of the College Institute Educators' Association (CIEA) who works with the LEAP program - has this to say:

> *After much planning, we began recruiting and selecting peer tutors (workers from the industry who are trained to be instructors), conducting information sessions throughout the site, and waiting with tremendous anxiety to see if participants would sign up for the program. We quickly found we were over subscribed at every site.*

Peer tutors and the JUMP provincial coordinators were trained by Capilano College, a community college in Vancouver. Each group of six to eight students has two peer tutors. The tutors get on going training and support from community college instructors.

Groups began to meet for two hours twice a week at Can for: Taylor Division, Caribou Pulp And Paper Co. (Quesnel), Macmillan Bathurst Industries (New Westminster), and Skeena Cellulose Inc. (Prince Rupert).

Expected Outcomes (Benefits):

LEAP gathered surveys of work place basic skills programs which show positive results:

For participants	For the union	For employers
• higher self-esteem/confidence • ability to advance in the workplace • more access to training • safer work environment • foundation for life-long learning	SOLIDARITY	• better health and safety practice • increased ability to handle on-line training • employees use new job skills and techniques more quickly • employees participate more actively in the workplace

USWA AT BRUNSWICK MINES: BASIC SKILLS IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH

In 1992, the United Steelworkers of America (USWA)Local 5385 at Brunswick Mines in Bathurst, New Brunswick negotiated a literacy and basic skills program. The CLC's Education and Skills Training (EAST) helped establish the program. The EAST program no longer exists, but the local program continued until 1999. Some 650 workers are employed at the mine. The employer generally supported the program from the start.

The company paid for the entire program, including books and materials, and four hours per week paid time for students. About 30 people a year have gone through the program, which has two classes, one in French and one in English. Some students have gone onto do their GED. Close links were maintained with the community college. New Brunswick has a CASP (Community Academic Services Program) in each community college which supports workplace literacy programs.

People take the program for different reasons. "One person wanted to know how to write cheques, while another wanted to know how to post for positions, and yet another wanted high school completion," said Sherry Morris on, one of the program's peer instructors.

CAW AT CHRYSLER AND THE BEST PROGRAM

The Canadian Auto Workers has had BEST programs in the Chrysler plants since 1992. The BEST program was needed for a number of reasons.

"Some workers needed to upgrade skills while other workers needed English as a Second Language," said CAW local 444 spokes person Ron Mosienko. "Some workers could not read health and safety notices while others were reluctant to post for better jobs, although they had the needed seniority, because of their low reading skills."

At the Windsor CAW Local 444, about 200 workers have gone through the four-level program. Some go onto take Independent Learning Centre (ILC) correspondence courses with the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Members participate for 4 hours a week, 50 per cent on paid company time and 50 per cent on their own time. The employer also pays for the replacement workers. The union has negotiated a lump sum for training which can be used for this purpose.

At the Chrysler plant in Bramalea, Ontario, where a program has been in place for a number of years, the CAW has renegotiated the terms with the company outside of the regular bargaining process.

THE BC TRAINING ACCORD: PROVINCE-WIDE TRAINING AGREEMENT

Sometimes training agreements can be negotiated for an entire sector. This agreement shows we can act on literacy and basic skills on many levels - employer-wide, industry-wide, regionally or province-wide.

In 1998, unions, community colleges and the provincial government in British Columbia negotiated the Training Accord (the Policy Accord on Government Training Expenditures). The accord was signed by employers (colleges, universities, college institutes and agencies) as represented by the Public Service Employers' Association, unions [College Institute Educators' Association (CIEA), British Columbia Government Employees Union,and others], and the provincial government.

The accord

- Outlines a new way for the college-institute sector to deal with government as a purchaser of education and training.
- Outlines anew way for the college-institute sector to deal with government as a purchaser of education and training.
- Includes "Welfare to Work," professional development of government employees, clients of government ministries, agencies, boards and commissions and crown corporation employees.
- Includes a requirement for the provincial government to select public sector trainers when they meet or surpass proposals from private trainers.

The Benefits

The partners in the accord claim the following benefits:

- Public sector facilities will be used more intensively.
- Programs will be developed that can be offered in any of the more than 100 communities served by the college-institute system.
- Students will complete programs that earn credits and can be transferred to other institutions.
- Training provided under the Accord can be used as a ladder to other programs.
- Other programs currently being used, like Prior Learning Assessment, may give students credit for the knowledge they already have.

Non-Profit Trainers

Partners in the Accord have also been cautious to recognize the important role of non-profit training providers. Non-profit organizations recognize and serve the diverse needs of their communities. The Accord specifically recognizes this important role.

Role for unions

- Unions representing educators in the college sector have agreed to work with the institutions in responding to the government as a client.
- Unions have agreed to be flexible in providing training services for government. This might include such things as off-site delivery of training, flexible scheduling and hours, and regional delivery.
- Unions have agreed to support the institutions in developing new programs, curriculum and approaches to meet the training needs of government.
- Unions have agreed to assist the institutions in ensuring that the government receives the best value for its training expenditures.
- The accord requires managers to consider using the public system before contracts are offered to private trainers. In some cases, it requires that private trainers be accredited with the Public Post Secondary Education Commission before receiving training contracts.

- Sources: CIEA and the text of the Accord

LAWS ON TRAINING IN QUEBEC AND BC

There is legislation on training which unions can use in Quebec and in the forest products industry in British Columbia.

In Quebec, companies with payrolls of over $250,000 must put the equivalent of 1 per cent of total payroll into training or pay this sum as a tax to the government for training. An organization called Emploi Québec distributes these funds to employers and unions who apply for support for their training initiatives. Foundation skills are a priority. The 1998-1999 allocation was $15 million. Unions in Quebec can use this law as a lever to ensure that training is conducted in their workplace in an equitable manner which meets the goals of the union.

In British Columbia, the B.C. Forest Renewal program is funded by a stumpage tax on employers, allocated in part to training of unionized forestry workers. Unions such as the CEP and the IWA can access this funding for training purposes. The CEP and PPWC partnered through the JUMP (Joint Union Management Program) to make LEAP possible. (See earlier story, *LEAP and JUMP keep things hopping*, p. 56)

HOW MANY UNIONS HAVE CONTRACT LANGUAGE ON LITERACY; TRAINING AND EDUCATION?

A 1999 survey of 975 collective agreements where there are 500 or more employees showed that about 45.4 per cent of agreements have a reference to paid training on the job. This represents about 51.4 per cent of the 2.3 million workers covered in the survey. This is step forward over 1998, when only 42.9 per cent of agreements had these provisions.

This means that 54 per cent of agreements, representing some 48.3 per cent of workers, have no provisions regarding training. Of course, many companies will have training that is not included in the collective agreement and therefore does not show up in the survey results.

We know that with more than 1.18 million workers having guaranteed access to training, we have made some progress. But it isn't enough. What about the workers at smaller locals who may be worse off than those at the large locals in the survey? What about the 68 per cent of workers in Canada who are unorganized and have no union to go to bat for them on training?

Here are some facts:

- Only 31.2 per cent of locals have training provisions where the employer pays for courses outside of work.
- About 15.2 per cent of contracts have fully paid educational leave, and 4.7 per cent have partially paid educational leave provisions, if the leave is job related.
- General paid education leave is only found in 4 per cent of contracts, while partially paid leave is found in 4.3 per cent.

SAMPLE CLAUSES

The following are excerpts from collective agreement clauses on training and literacy. Copies of the full text are available from the CLC.

1. General Motors and CAW-Canada

BASIC LEARNING SKILLS PROGRAM (B.E.S.T.)

During the current negotiations, the Employer and the Union agreed, in accordance with the provisions of the attached Document (#102), to provide the RE.S.T. (Basic Education for Skills Training) Program at the following General Motors of Canada Limited locations:

- London
- Oshawa
- St. Catharine's
- Woodstock
- Windsor Trim
- Windsor Transmission

The parties agreed that the B.E.S.T. Program would be established within the following guide lines:

- the Program will focus on basic literacy and English as a second language
- the Program is of thirty-seven (37) weeks duration consisting off our (4) hours of class each week
- a minimum of one (1) class and a maximum off our (4) classes will be conducted at each location
- the class size will be limited to a minimum of six (6) participants and a maximum of twelve (12) participants
- the local parties will determine the appropriate class schedule and timing, based on plant production schedules
- the local parties will develop an awareness program to inform employees of the Program
- Program will be available on a voluntary basis fifty (50) per cent of employee's class-time will be compensated at straight-time rates. Compensated class-time shall not qualify a person for benefits such as, but not limited to short work week
- the Program instructor(s) will be selected by the Local Plant Chair person from the existing workforce for each location as follows:
  - Windsor Trim, 2
  - Windsor Transmission, 2
  - London, 2
  - Woodstock, 1
  - St. Catharine's, 3
  - Oshawa, 4
- the Company will cover the cost of the instructor's lost wages at straight time rate during the BEST Program two (2) week train-the- trainer course.
- the instructor will be paid on a straight time basis for in-classroom hours, in addition to one (1) hour of paid preparation time for every four (4) hours of in-classroom time
- the Company will provide suitable facilities and equipment.

The GM-CAW Training Review Committee will review and monitor the results of the Program.

The parties agreed that it may be necessary to discuss mechanisms for the replacement of participants in order to avoid any negative impact on quality or efficiency of operations.

Additionally, the parties agreed to provide a learning skills program for the Broisbriand location that would be consistent with the RE.S.T. Program parameters, if a need can be identified.

Furthermore, the parties agreed to seek government funding in support of the program.

Any problems arising from the implementation of this pilot program will be discussed between the National CAW and Divisional Labour Relations.

2. Zehrs Markets and UFCW, Local 1977 (Ontario)

9:03 Not with standing Article 9.01, the Company may grant a leave of absence without pay to employees who attend full time post-secondary school or who are in a full time co-op program.

33.09 a) Effective July 1, 1991, the Company agrees to contribute fifteen cents (15c) per hour to the U.F.C.W. Local 1977 Zehrs Training and Education Trust Fund for all hours paid and worked by all full-time and part-time employees to a maximum of five dollars and eighty-five cents ($5.85) per week per employee.

Hours paid and worked as defined and set out in Article 33.07 (a) The Company shall forward contributions every four (4) weeks to the Union and shall include a list of employees, the number of hours paid and worked by each employee during each four (4) week period.

This clause led to the establishment of a UFCW training centre in Cambridge Ontario.

3. BC Government and Service Employees' Union

20.7 *Leave for Taking Courses* -

(a) An employee shall be granted leave with pay to take courses at the request of the Employer. The Employer shall bear the full cost of the course, including tuition fees, entrance or registration fees, laboratory fees, and course-required books, necessary traveling and subsistence expenses, and other legitimate expenses where applicable. Fees are to be paid by the Employer when due.

(b) A regular employee may be granted leave without pay, to leave with partial pay, to take courses in which the employee wishes to enrol.

20.8 *Educational Leave* -

(a) Educational leave granted by the Employer to regular employees requesting such leave shall be in accordance with the following provisions:

(1) The duration of educational leave granted to regular employees to take advanced or special training which will be of benefit to the employee or the Employer may be for varying periods up to one (1) year, which may be renewed by mutual agreement ...

Memorandum of Understanding #6 - Protocol for Joint Union Management Training Initiatives.

The parties share a common interest in developing mechanisms to further facilitate the joint training initiatives specified in Articles 1and 22. To progress in his area the parties will establish a Joint Union! Management Training Steering Committee.

The purpose of the committee is to provide support for joint training initiatives and advice on program content, delivery mechanisms and implementation as appropriate. The committee will be comprised of three (3) members appointed by the Union and three (3) members appointed by the Employer and will be co-chaired...

4. Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, Local 459. Winnipeg (Now UNITE)

21.06 Each Manufacturer agrees to contribute the equivalent of one quarter (1/4%) per cent of union members' wages into an ACTWU Local 459 Education and Research Fund, which shall be solely administered by the Union...

5. Cameo Inc. and CEP Local 501, Montreal

Joint Training Committee. To receive up to $15,000 annually for further education and literacy training (new addition).

6. CUPE LocalS Hamilton Municipal Workers

13.14 The Employer will grant a leave of absence with pay to employee (s) enrolled in the Literacy in the Workplace program to the extent that, in management's opinion, operational requirements permit.

7. CEP Local 1120 and Weyerhauser (Prince Albert Sask.)

21.04... (b) Employees with five (5) or more years of continuous service will be granted, upon request, an educational leave of absence to attend High School, University or a recognized Technical or Vocational School...

These clauses are important beginnings. They are not included here because they are ideal, but as important first steps toward entrenching the right of workers to education. We need to build on our own experience and share our stories of both successes and set-backs so that we can learn from each other and move forward. For more information on literacy, training and education contract clauses visit the website at www.clc-ctc.ca. Also look for the Training and Literacy Link for further examples of contract language.

The CLC would like to hear your stories. Please contact the CLC Workplace Literacy Project, 2841 Riverside Drive, Ottawa, K1V 8X7, telephone (613)521-3400.

Endnotes

[1] Statistics Canada and HRDC "*Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada.*" Ottawa 1996.

[2] Statistics Canada. "*Literacy in Canada, Results from International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS).*"

[3] Statistics Canada. Labour Force Survey. 1998.

[4] Canadian Labour Congress. "*Learning for Our Lives: Union Guide to Worker-Centred Literacy.*" 2000.

[5] Canadian Labour Congress. "*What Unions Should Know About Getting the Money For Literacy And Basic Skills Programs.*" 1998.

[6] Canadian Labour Congress. "*Making it Clear: Clear Language for Union Communications.*" 1999.

[7] Canadian Labour Congress. "*Delivery of Training, Education and Employment Services.*" June, 1998. Available at www.clc-ctc.ca.

[8] Anderson, John. "*Human Resources Development of Canada Survey.*" May 1999.