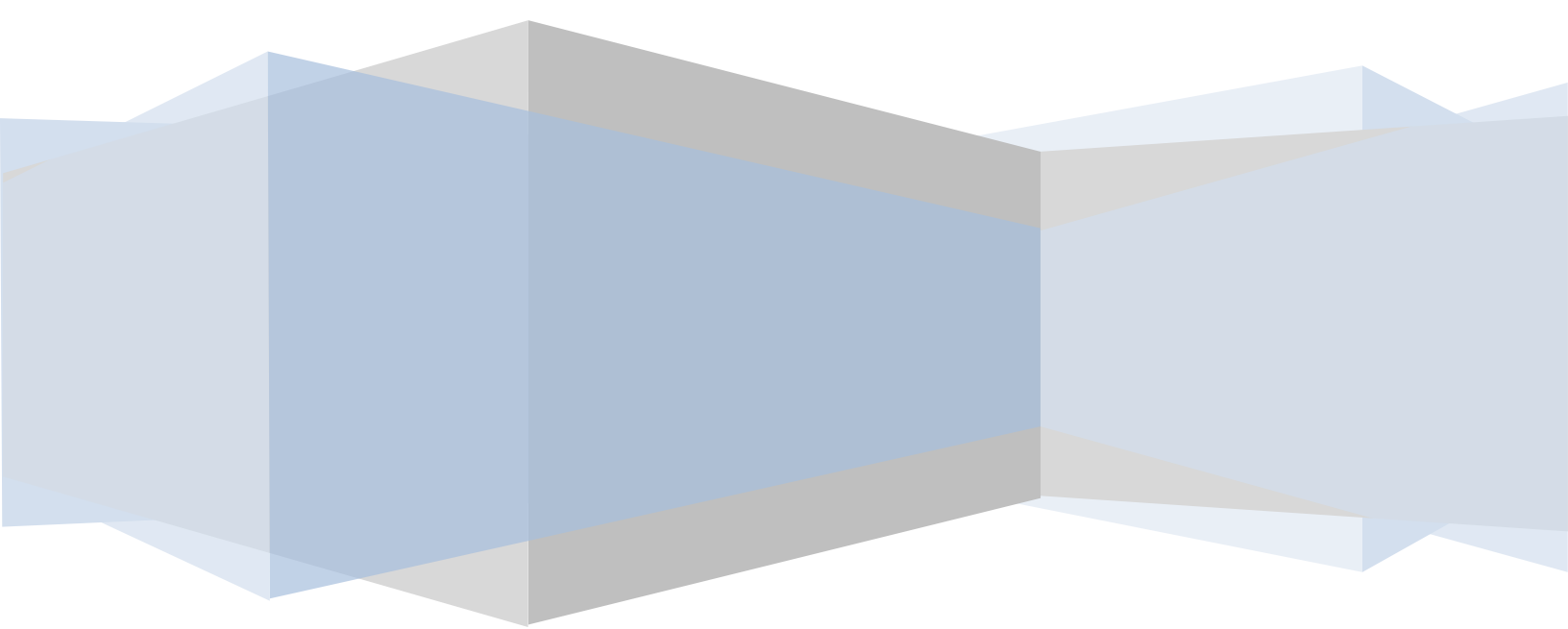# Integrating Essential Skills in Literacy Tutor Training

Final Report

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Field Test Sites: Literacy Unlimited (Quebec)
                             Midland Area Reading Council (Ontario)
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                             RECLAIM Literacy Council (Quebec)
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Integrating Essential Skills in Literacy Tutor Training
Final Report

Overview

This two-year project that commenced in January 2008 focused on incorporating Essential Skills into training for volunteer tutors across Canada in order to support learner transitions into the economic sector. Training segments for volunteer tutors were researched, developed, peer-reviewed, field-tested and delivered. Tools aimed at demonstrating Essential Skills for level 1 and 2 learners were developed, field tested and made accessible through our online classroom via the Laubach Literacy Ontario (LLO) website.

LLO partnered with two other provinces for this project. **Literacy Volunteers of Quebec** and **Laubach Literacy New Brunswick** provided informed advice and feedback through a committee structure. In addition, two employer partners participated throughout the development stages. **Hawco Products Ltd.** and **Montreal Woollens (Canada) Ltd.** provided input and supplied authentic workplace materials to develop two sample activity sets.

The first objective was to increase the use and understanding of Essential Skills in community-based literacy programs, and to help volunteer literacy tutors learn how to integrate them into their lesson plans. This included access for literacy tutors to training in Essential Skills and the development of tools to support the integration of Essential Skills into programming. Tutor training segments on Essential Skills were written and made available online. Part of that training includes support on using resources effectively in developing literacy programming with an emphasis on lesson planning activities.

The second objective was to develop, write, and distribute learning activities focused on Reading, Writing, Document Use and Numeracy in Levels 1 & 2 of the Essential Skills. There is a lack of workforce related activities for lower level learners, and the ones that were developed can serve as models that can be adapted to meet individual learner needs.

Deliverables

1. Employer Partnerships

Partnerships were developed with two employers in the manufacturing sector. The first employer, Hawco Products Limited is a small chemical manufacturer located in Brantford Ontario. The second employer, Montreal Woollens is a large textile manufacturer located in Cambridge Ontario. In-depth interviews were conducted with both employers.

2. Employment Focus Group

An employment focus group was held at Canadore College in North Bay on Friday, June 20, 2008. This focus group was held in conjunction with LLO's annual conference. Participants were provided with the following discussion questions:

A. How familiar is your organization with Essential Skills?

B. What are the most important skills and qualities that your organization looks for when hiring employees?

C. What could a new employee expect the first week of work?

 D. What types of materials and documentation would an entry level employee encounter in your workplace?

 E. This project is focused on four of the Essential Skills:
- Reading Text
- Document Use
- Numeracy
- Writing

What are some specific examples of how these four Essential Skills are used in your workplace?

The information gleaned from this forum was utilized in the deliverables of the project.

3. Flexible Learning Research

Prior to developing online training, non-proprietary flexible learning platforms were researched to determine the best vehicle for housing the training. In order to ensure that the training was sustainable from a cost perspective, non-proprietary platforms were researched. The paper defines and outlines the best practices in flexible learning. Research was gathered from both academic and government sources in order to better understand the concept of flexible learning, as well as identify many best practices associated with the creation and delivery of flexible learning tools. Several popular flexible learning packages were reviewed, and recommendations were made as to which of the tools are best suited for the development of flexible learning modules. The paper is available in both French and English on the LLO website: http://www.laubach-on.ca/ A Power Point presentation and a brochure handout were also created from the research, and are also posted on the LLO website for Literacy and Basic Skills consumption.

Based on the research and available support Moodle was chosen. A partnership with AlphaPlus Centre was developed. AlphaPlus Centre is a provincial umbrella organization in Ontario that actively supports research, and promotes best practices in adult basic education for practitioners and programs. One of the areas they focus on is the innovative use of technology. AlphaPlus Centre currently houses the online training platform for LLO on their server and is able to provide ongoing support. LLO has the option to transfer the platform to their server at a later date if necessary.

4. Enhancement of the LLO website

The Moodle platform was integrated into the LLO website which was being redesigned as this project was underway. The Moodle platform was branded **Training Post** and can be accessed from each page of the training section on the LLO website via a "hot" button.

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5. Integrating Essential Skills into Lesson Planning Online Course

In the fall of 2009, LLO introduced the introductory online course for literacy tutors, practitioners, trainers and tutor trainees. During the course participants complete a variety of activities in eight sections to learn more about four of the nine Essential Skills: Reading Text, Document Use, Writing and Numeracy and how to integrate Essential Skills into lesson planning.

Prior to the general release of the online course, six sites from three provinces field tested the online course:

- Literacy Unlimited (Quebec)
- Midland Area Reading Council (Ontario)
- Moncton Regional Learning Council (New Brunswick)
- RECLAIM Literacy Council (Quebec)
- The Literacy Group of Waterloo Region (Ontario)
- Yamaska Literacy Council (Quebec)

Each of the seven modules in the course included a pre and post survey for field test participants to complete. Results from that survey were used to revise the modules. Six facilitated sessions were also provided in the fall to orient participants to the online classroom and the course.

The course is now available on a continuous basis on Training Post. At the completion of the project a total of 85 participants from across Canada had participated in the online course. Participants are asked to complete a pre and post survey for the course. LLO will use this information to make improvements to the course over time.

Course Outline

Below you find the course as it appears online.

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Welcome to Laubach Literacy Ontario's

Integrating Essential Skills into Lesson Planning

Introductory module for literacy tutors, practitioners, trainers and tutor trainees. This module is part of LLO's enhanced training system. The module contains eight sections. You will complete a variety of activities in each section.

Scroll down the page to get to the next section.

- Complete all the activities in a section before moving on.
- You can complete the module at your own pace. You can leave and return to the module at a later time. Each section of the module is dedicated to a different topic. Take your time completing each section. Even after you have completed all of the sections, you can return to the module at any time for a refresher!

Before moving on to the next section, please introduce yourself in the forum and take the Pre Module Participant Survey. When you have completed all seven sections complete the Post Essential Skills Module Participant survey in section 8. It will only take a few minutes to complete these two surveys and it will provide invaluable feedback for us.

- You can talk to other online participants in the chat room at any time.
- To access the LLO website, click on the link provided.
- New information and announcements about Essential Skills will be posted in the news forum.

- Introduce Yourself in this Forum!
- Pre Module Participant Survey file
- Tutor Chat Room
- Click here to access the Laubach Literacy Ontario website file

Icebreaker: Discover your learning style

In this section you will explore your own **learning style**. You will watch a video, complete an online questionnaire and tell us your learning style.

The Essential Skills sections below utilize a variety of media. Understanding your own learning style will help you identify areas where you might seek more information. For example, if you find that a video you watch in the icebreaker module is really helpful, you should search for other videos that might help you understand a topic better.

Understanding and identifying learning styles is also a fundamental first step in any lesson planning process. The outcome of this module is for you to be able to integrate essential skills into a lesson plan for a student.

Instructions: Click on each activity below to complete. When you have finished each activity click the back arrow button (upper left hand corner of your screen) to return to the course.
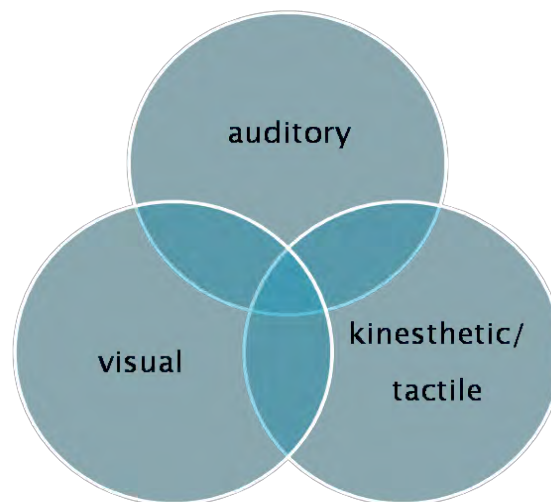
- Learning Styles Quick Overview PDF document
- Click here to watch a "Learning Styles" Video file
- Complete this online questionnaire to determine your learning style. file
- What is your learning style? Choice
- OPTIONAL ACTIVITY "Attitudes Towards Thinking and Learning" Survey
- OPTIONAL For even more interactive information on learning styles click here! file

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What are Essential Skills?

In this section you will explore **Essential Skills** and start to think about how they relate to adult literacy.

Essential Skills are the skills we need to work, learn and live. It has been said that Essential Skills are the "Velcro to which all other skills stick".

Essential Skills provide the foundation for learning all other skills. They are enabling skills that help people to anticipate change and adapt to it.

The Government of Canada and other national and international agencies have identified and validated nine Essential Skills. These skills are used in almost every occupation and throughout daily life in different ways and at different levels of complexity.

There are nine Essential Skills:

Reading Text
Document Use
Numeracy
Writing
Oral Communication
Working with Others
Continuous Learning
Thinking Skills
Computer Use

Many adults new to literacy are focused on the first four skills: reading, using documents, math and writing. "Laubach Way to Reading", "Challenger" series, "Voyager" series and the "Breakthrough to Math" series can provide the foundation for the acquisition those four Essential Skills.

Essential Skills are dormant until there is a **task**. It is the **task** that determines the Essential Skills and the complexity level. Essential Skills are described in terms of skill usage from basic to complex. These are referred to as the "complexity" levels. Essential Skill Profiles have been developed for over 150 occupational groups. The profiles describe how each Essential Skill is used by a worker in that occupation and gives the "complexity rating" to tell how difficult the "tasks" related to that skill are.

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Instructions

1. Click on the *Essential Skills Summary* definitions document. You may want to print off this resource for future reference.
2. Click on the *What are Essential Skills Profiles* link and review. You may want to print off this resource for future reference. Please note that there is currently a problem with the Essential Skills Profiles link. HRSDC is working on fixing this link.
3. Test out your Numeracy and Document Use Essential Skills with the online indicators found on the HRSDC website.
4. Complete the short quiz on what you have learned so far.
5. The last activity in this section is to visit the Essential Skills website and take a look around at your own pace.

Remember: Each time you do an activity, return to the module by clicking the back arrow button on the upper left hand corner of your computer screen.

- Essential Skills Summary Definitions PDF document
- What are Essential Skills Profiles?
- Online Indicator Tools for Document Use and Numeracy file
- Essential Skills Review Quiz
- Click here to explore the Essential Skills Website file

Reading Text

Reading Text refers to reading material that is in the form of sentences or paragraphs.

Reading Text generally involves reading notes, letters, memos, manuals, specifications, regulations, books, reports or journals.

Reading Text includes:
- forms and labels if they contain *at least one paragraph*
- print and non-print media (for example, texts on computer screens and microfiche)
- paragraph-length text in charts, tables and graphs

Reading Text has a five level complexity rating scale.

Source: http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/general/readers_guide_whole.shtml

Instructions

1. Click on the *Reading Text: Complexity Level* document and review. You may want to print off this resource for future reference.
2. Click on the *Reading Text: Types of Text* document and review. You may want to print off this resource for future reference.
3. Click on the *Essential Skills Reading Indicator Tool*. You can print this tool and try it out or just review it. This is a tool that could be used with a learner if it is applicable to that learner's goal.
4. Watch the video from Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) to get a better understanding of how basic reading tasks impact everyday life.
5. Click on the "Wiki" and add your ideas.
6. Click on the *International Survey of Reading Skills* for more information
7. The *Readers' Guide to Essential Skills Profiles* is found on the HRSDC website. You can refer to this resource if you need further information on the Essential Skill of Reading Text. Once you are on the site click on "Reading Text" in the table of contents.

Remember: Each time you do an activity, return to the module by clicking the back arrow button on the upper left hand corner of your computer screen.

- Reading Text: Complexity Levels PDF document
- Reading Text: Types of Text PDF document
- Essential Skills Reading Indicator Tool PDF document
- Why reading is important - watch this video from CCL file
- Types of reading text wiki - add your ideas
- International Survey of Reading Skills file
- Resource: Readers' Guide to Essential Skills Profiles

Document Use

Document Use refers to tasks that involve a variety of information displays in which words, numbers, icons and other visual characteristics (e.g., line, colour, shape) are given meaning by their spatial arrangement. For example, graphs, lists, tables, drawings, signs and labels are documents used in the world of work.

If a document includes a paragraph of text such as on a label or a completed form, it is also included in *Reading Text*. Documents requiring the entry of words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs are also included in *Writing*.

Document Use includes

- print and non-print media (for example, computer screen or microfiche documents, equipment gauges, clocks and flags)
- Reading/interpreting and writing/completing/producing of documents–these two uses of documents often occur simultaneously as part of the same task, e.g., completing a form, checking off items on a list of tasks, plotting information on a graph, and entering information on an activity schedule**.**

By participating in this online course you are doing tasks that require document use.

Document Use is rated on a **five-level scale** of complexity. The higher the rating, the more complex the task. The rating scale takes into account:

- the complexity of the document(s) (i.e., complexity attributable to the structure of the document, number of documents and document type);

- the complexity of finding/entering information (i.e., complexity attributable to the information search and information entry); and

- the complexity of information use (i.e., complexity attributable to the content knowledge prerequisites and thinking process).

Each level of the scale is defined with reference to all of these dimensions. The complexity rating assigned to a task is the best summary description of its level of complexity.

The levels of the document use complexity scale are compatible with those used in the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), except that IALS Level 4 has been broken down into our Levels 4 and 5.

Source: http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/general/readers_guide_whole.shtml

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Instructions

1. Click on the *Document Use Tasks* document to see a list of 22 common tasks associated with this Essential Skill. You may want to print off this resource for future reference.
2. Click on the *Document Use Indicator Tool*. You can print this tool and try it out or just review it. This is a tool that could be used with a learner if it is applicable to that learner's goal.
3. Click on *Document Use Complexity Rating Scale and Examples* to see the matrix of the scale. You may want to print off this resource for future reference.
4. Watch the video on *Visual Literacy* for an understanding of how document use impact everyday life.
5. The *Readers' Guide to Essential Skill Profiles* is found on the HRSDC website. You can refer to this resource if you need further information on the Essential Skill of Document Use. Once you are on the site click on "Document Use" in the table of contents.

Remember: Each time you do an activity, return to the module by clicking the back arrow button on the upper left hand corner of your computer screen.

- Document Use Tasks PDF document
- Document Use Indicator Tool PDF document
- Document Use Complexity Rating Scale with Examples PDF document
- Video: Visual Literacy file
- Resource: Readers' Guide to Essential Skills Profiles

Writing

Writing includes:

- writing texts and writing in documents (for example, filling in forms)
- non-paper-based writing (for example, typing on a computer)

Writing is broken down into three different dimensions:

- Length and purpose of the writing
- Style and structure
- Content of the writing

Writing tasks are rated on a five level scale of complexity.

Source: http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/general/readers_guide_whole.shtml

Instructions

1. Click on the *Writing Levels and Sample Tasks* document and review. You may want to print off this resource for future reference.
2. Click on the *Writing Self Assessment* document. This tool can be used by a learner to self assess writing. You may want to print off this resource for future reference.
3. The *Readers' Guide to Essential Skills Profiles* is found on the HRSDC website. You can refer to this resource if you need further information on the Essential Skill of Writing. Once you are on the site click on "Writing" in the table of contents.

Remember: Each time you do an activity, return to the module by clicking the back arrow button on the upper left hand corner of your computer screen.

- Writing Levels and Sample Tasks PDF document
- Writing Self Assessment PDF document
- Resource: Readers' Guide to Essential Skills Profiles

Numeracy

Numeracy refers to the workers' use of numbers and their being required to think in quantitative terms.

There are four application settings for numeracy:
- money math - financial transactions, such as handling cash, preparing bills or making payments;
- scheduling or budgeting and accounting math - managing time and money as resources, planning and monitoring their use, assessing best value, reducing waste;
- measurement and calculation math - measuring and describing the physical world; and
- data analysis math - analysis of numerical data.

The Numerical Calculation Complexity Rating Scale has five levels. This scale is used to rate the complexity of numerical calculation tasks regardless of the application setting.

The Numerical Calculation Complexity Rating Scale is based on two dimensions - operations required and translation:
- Operations required refers to the actual math operations used, such as multiplication and division. It covers the number of different operations used, the number of steps of calculation and the difficulty of the operations used.
- Translation refers to turning a work problem into a set of mathematical operations so that math may be applied to obtain an answer.

Source: http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/general/readers_guide_whole.shtml

Instructions

1. Click on the *Essential Skills Numeracy Indicator Tool*. You can print this tool and try it out or just review it. This is a tool that could be used with a learner if it is applicable to that learner's goal.
3. Watch the "Born Numeracy" for an understanding of how numeracy impacts everyday life.
4. Add your math examples to the "Wiki".
5. The *Readers' Guide to Essential Skills Profiles* is found on the HRSDC website. You can refer to this resource if you need further information on the Essential Skill of Numeracy. Once you are on the site click on "Numeracy" in the table of contents.

Remember: Each time you do an activity, return to the module by clicking the back arrow button on the upper left hand corner of your computer screen.

- Essential Skills Numeracy Indicator Tool PDF document
- The "Born Numeracy" Video file
- Examples of Math in the Real World Wiki
- Resource: Readers' Guide to Essential Skills Profiles

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Integrating Essential Skills into Lesson Planning

Benefits of Lesson Planning:

- Individualize to the student's interests, needs and goals
- Increase your self confidence as a tutor
- Minimize wasted time
- Integrating other materials and techniques will add variety to the lessons

Goal Setting

Essential Skills are primarily focused on the workplace. For students with a work place goal, considering Essential Skills as part of the lesson planning process will support the goal. Think about what types of tasks the student would need to do if they had their goal job. Use the Essential Skills website to research the Essential Skills needed to be successful in that job.
Remember that students sometimes have a hard time verbalizing goals if tutors ask, "What are your goals?" Some alternative questions that may help to determine a students' goals:

"What made you decide to come for reading help?"

"What would you like to be able to read?"

When a student has a long-term goal they may get frustrated when they feel that they have not achieved it in a reasonable time. Think about how to break a long term goal into shorter-term goals.

Considerations when planning a lesson:

Allow time to work on both basic reading and writing skills as well as on activities which relate to the student's personal goals.

1. Each lesson should contain reading, skills practice, and writing.
2. New material should be introduced first, followed by review and reinforcement activities, such as supplementary reading, extra exercises, or something just for fun (e.g., a crossword puzzle or game).
3. A variety of activities and materials should be used, incorporating the student's input and suggestions.

Essential Skills Profiles

Essential Skills profiles describe how each of the nine Essential Skills is used by workers in a particular occupation. Over the past several years, the Government of Canada has conducted research examining the skills people use at work. From this research and through interviews with workers, managers, practitioners and leading researchers, approximately 250 Essential Skills profiles have been developed for various occupations of the National Occupational Classification. To date, profiles have been completed for all occupations requiring a high school education or less.

What the profiles include:

- A brief description of the occupation.
- A list of the most important Essential Skills.
- Examples of tasks that illustrate how each Essential Skill is applied.
- Complexity ratings that indicate the level of difficulty.
- The physical aspects of performing the job and the attitudes that workers feel are needed to do the job well.
- Future trends affecting Essential Skills.

The profiles can be used to help you:

- learn more about the skills you need in various occupations;
- develop workplace training programs, learning plans, or job descriptions;
- investigate career options, and;
- create educational tools to enhance skills development.

Instructions

1. Watch the Lesson Planning Power Point. Each slide is narrated so turn up the volume on your computer and make sure you listen before moving on to the next slide. Click on your "escape" button to return to the course.
2. Click on "Using the Essential Skills Website" link for an overview of what is on the HRSDC website and how you would use that information as an adult literacy practitioner/teacher (tutor).
3. The Essential Skills Success Stories will help you understand how Essential Skills can make a difference for a student.
4. The resource "Making Essential Skills WORK for You" was produced by Laubach Literacy Ontario. Sample activities related to specific jobs can be found in this document.
5. The resource "Linking Laubach with Essential Skills" was produced by Laubach Literacy Ontario. The project looked at the three Essential Skills: Reading Text Document Use; and Writing and their relationship to three key Laubach series: Laubach Way to Reading, Challenger and Voyager.

Remember: Each time you do an activity, return to the module by clicking the back arrow button on the upper left hand corner of your computer screen.

- Lesson Planning Power Point PowerPoint presentation
- Using the Essential Skills Website file
- Essential Skills Success Stories PDF document
- Resource: Making Essential Skills WORK for You file
- Linking Laubach with Essential Skills PDF document

6. Activities

Eight activities based on authentic materials provided by the two employment partners were developed to give practitioners an idea of what they can do with authentic materials they collect. The same six sites that field tested the online course reviewed the activity template that was used to develop the eight sample activities. Each activity has a cover page with summary information and instruction notes, as well as information related to the relevant occupation from the Essential Skills profiles including sample tasks and authentic materials from the employer partners. The activities focus on Reading Text, Document Use, Numeracy and Writing. Many activities also include an optional extension activity that involve computer use. The activities are available in English and French on the LLO website:

http://www.laubach-on.ca/

Activity List

Occupation	Activity	Essential Skill Focus	Level	Other Essential Skills
Chemical Plant	Using a Product Catalogue	Reading Text Document Use	2 2	Writing
Chemical Plant	Completing a Goods Return Report	Document Use	2	Writing
Chemical Plant	Completing a Safety Circle Check	Document Use	2	Writing
Chemical Plant	Understanding a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)	Reading Text Document Use	3 3	Writing Numeracy Computer Use
Textile Plant	Choosing Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)	Reading Text Document Use	2 2	Computer Use
Textile Plant	Completing a Return Authorization	Document Use Writing	2 1	NA
Textile Plant	Understanding Workplace Policies	Reading Text	2	NA
Textile Plant	Calculating Pay	Numeracy	2	Reading Text

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Conclusion

Workforce training is key to success for literacy learners with employment goals and the use of the nationally recognized system of Essential Skills also gives community based literacy programs more credence to employers.   The opportunity through this project to hold an employer focus group and work closely with employer partners was beneficial to raise the awareness of Essential Skills in the workforce.

Providing training for tutors and practitioners that can be accessed online allows us to address the need for more flexible learning opportunities. Literacy learners will benefit from the tutor expertise gained by accessing this valuable and much needed training on Essential Skills, especially the learners with employment goal paths.

In our environmental scan prior to proposing this project we found that there was a lack of workforce related activities for lower level learners. The opportunity to develop activities using authentic materials from employers will provide a valuable resource to tutors and practitioners working with learners that have employment related goals. The sample activities developed can serve as models that can be adapted to meet individual learner needs.