

NEWS BULLETIN

NOVEMBER 2016



WHAT IS THE PROVINCIAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS FOR LITERACY?

We are a coalition of the ten provincial Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) support organizations funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD):

AlphaPlus • Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes • College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading • Contact North • Community Literacy of Ontario • Centre FORA • Laubach Literacy Ontario • Ningwakwe Learning Press • Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators • Ontario Native Literacy Coalition

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We meet three times a year in Toronto and work together using a variety of online gathering spaces in between those meetings. Sometimes we hold joint meetings with the Learning Networks of Ontario (LNO).


The Provincial Support Organizations for Literacy (PSOL) has no budget as an organization so each member organization pitches in and provides meeting space and other supports so we can get together and work effectively. Each organization will take a turn as the “lead organization.” This year Laubach Literacy Ontario is the lead organization.

We will be publishing two newsletters a year – this is our first one. We will be collecting your questions and getting responses from the ministry when we can, so please get in touch with your queries about programming, policy and planning.

Literacy and Basic Skills can sometimes seem invisible in education strategies and policy planning. We have to be visible for the invisible. PSOL takes a “literacy secretariat” approach. We look at how literacy touches all aspects of a person’s life and therefore all aspects of government planning and programming.

Our organizations have experience operating provincially across streams, sectors and regions. We use our provincial perspective to identify gaps and overlaps in programming for literacy learners and to document all the ways LBS fits into workforce development, poverty reduction and education strategies.

We are working on our common understanding of policy directions and developing policy positions in order to approach ministries and local MPs and demonstrate how LBS can help solve the problems they have identified.



We will mobilize our collective knowledge, understanding and experience to support the enhancement of provincial adult education strategies that include LBS and provincial literacy strategies that reach across ministries. We support education strategies that recognize the diverse needs and aspirations of literacy learners and that support them in achieving their goals.

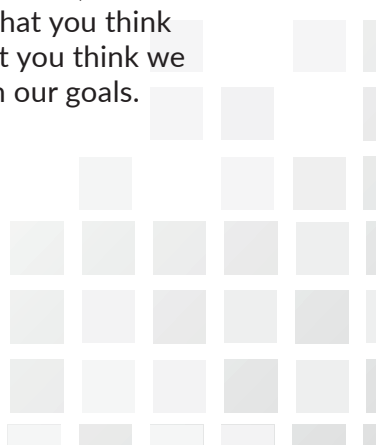
WE WILL DO THIS BY :

- 1** Increasing the capacity of Literacy and Basic Skills service providers to understand and implement the Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development's (MAESD) emerging initiatives and policies;
- 2** Increasing collaboration between the Support Organizations to provide feedback to MAESD and other relevant ministries on provincial LBS issues;
- 3** Increasing the sharing of issues, challenges, successes and best practices from the literacy field;

4 Increasing the visibility of LBS and its return on investment for funders to the provincial and federal cabinet;

5 Representing the needs and interests of the Literacy and Basic Skills sector to government on matters related to current and new policy and program development.

PSOL is in a good position to bring a unified, consistent and inclusive voice that reflects the diversity of the Ontario literacy field to the places where adult literacy policies and policies that touch adult literacy practice and learning are discussed but, of course, we will need your help. Let us know what you think of the PSOL initiative and what you think we need to know in order to reach our goals.



LITERACY + INNOVATION = SUCCESS

Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) is pleased to share our "Literacy + Innovation = Success" newsletter.

In this newsletter we share eight innovative Literacy and Basic Skills partnerships with Ontario Works, employment services, other service providers, the local community and employers.

These stories were shared by diverse community-based literacy agencies around our province. They provide only a snapshot of the determination to develop creative partnerships in support of literacy that are occurring all across Ontario.

You can access our "Literacy + Innovation = Success" newsletter by **CLICKING HERE**.

In addition, Community Literacy of Ontario also hosted a webinar about innovation in Literacy and Basic Skills programs. You can access this free webinar by **CLICKING HERE**.

PREPARATION PROGRAM AT THE OTTAWA CARLTON DSB

The Highly Successful PSW Prep Program Transitions Students to Employment and to the Employer Recognized PSW Certificate program!

The Ottawa Carlton District School Board (Adult and Continuing Education) PSW Preparation program has been running for over 10 years. In 2003 it started out as a program to train students to work as Homemakers. Over the years the program evolved and today 40% of the graduates transition to the full time PSW Certificate program offered at the OCDSB. Another 40% of the grads work in health care settings such as long term care homes. Others complete their high school diplomas or transition to post secondary education.



The learners are often New Canadians that have an interest in working in health care in Canada. They require reading, writing, speaking and listening skills at the CLB 6 level to enter the program. The program coordinator says she can be flexible with the CLB levels

as some students have slightly lower levels but make up for it with their other competencies. The curriculum is aligned with the OALCF pathways and includes students being able to achieve various milestones.

The 18 week program is intensive and graduates gain workplace competencies in areas such as-- how to speak to vulnerable clients, problem solving in patient situations, team work, and operating equipment such as an Automated External Defibrillator. There is a significant focus on understanding the common ailments such as diabetes, dementia, and Alzheimer's. The staff also provide job interview preparation and other related job search skills.

Graduates receive a completion certificate (from Continuing Education, OCDSB), the Food Handler Certificate from the City of Ottawa as well as St. John Ambulance first aid training.

The program is funded through the Literacy Basic Skills program, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skill Development.



For more information about the program please contact program coordinator, Susan at susan.verret@ocdsb.ca

THE POSITIVE CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Together with its 26 members and 40 points of service, COFA helps to create the conditions that will allow Francophone adults with low literacy skills in Ontario to acquire the skills they need to attain their training goals.

In 2014-2015, COFA's network served 3,232 learners who were receiving literacy and basic skills (LBS) training. Of this number, 356 learners were taking distance learning courses through COFA's distance education service for adult Francophones in Ontario (F@D). Unlike any other in Canada, this service offers five micro-programs and 62 quality courses for a total of 359 modules and 1,150 training hours. F@D offers training that allows learners functioning at literacy levels 1 and 2 to reach level 3 (consult Appendix 1 to learn more about the literacy levels).

Learners with low literacy skills, which represent a specific clientele, are faced with many difficulties when they participate in distance learning:

- The inherent difficulties related to the learners' literacy levels in reading;
- A low level of computer literacy;
- Difficulties using the learning platforms.

These factors have a direct impact on retention rates, forcing stakeholders in the field to innovate constantly.

In order to face these challenges, F@D is guided by principles that underlie the concept of a positive client experience. These principles are as follows:

- **Humanize distance education:**
 - » A person is always available to take calls;
 - » A trainer follows up regularly by telephone with the learners;
 - » Online training is encouraged for learners with lower literacy levels;
 - » Basic computer training and training on the platforms are a compulsory prelude to distance learning.
- **Increase accessibility to training:**
 - » A Website with a simple design;
 - » The minimum number of clicks required for accessing resources and training;
 - » Selecting the simplest technology possible for delivering training;
 - » Narration and multimedia content are integrated in training in order to strengthen the content.
- **Use a simple and precise language;**
- **Use an andragogic and entertaining approach based on genuine tasks;**
- **Develop new methods for delivering training, such as reverse online courses;**
- **Present the material in several contexts using, for example, cross training;**
- Favour blended learning by combining COFA's virtual network with its physical network, which would allow learners with lower literacy skills to receive formal guidance from a trainer online and one located in a centre.

These principles, which have been applied systematically so far, have served us well, because the popularity of F@D's distance training has not waned and retention rates remain high.