RESEARCH REPORT

Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills:
Increasing student success through contextualized learning

ptp
pathway to possibilities

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

"Authentic learning is a pedagogical approach that allows students to explore, discuss, and meaningfully construct concepts and relationships in contexts that involve real-world problems and projects that are relevant to the learner."[1]

? How are literacy programs in Ontario incorporating or integrating workforce literacy[2] (understood as all of the activities that programs undertake to support students who want to move on to employment) into their programming?

? What can be learned from the experiences of adult literacy programs that have integrated hands-on or authentic workplace tasks into their programming?

? What effective or best practices in workforce literacy can be drawn from the experiences of these programs?

These are the major questions we seek to address in this research project.

The project was undertaken to describe and examine the background, rationale and activities of the Teamwork program at PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs (formerly Preparatory Training Programs of Toronto)[3] in Toronto and to look at what some other adult literacy programs in Ontario are doing in the area of hands-on and authentic learning as an approach for developing literacy, numeracy and employment skills.

The report provides an overview of the workforce literacy programming practices, from the perspective of instructors and students at PTP and several other programs in Ontario, and an exploration of effective and best practices in workforce literacy, based on the experiences of these programs.

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[1]   Mims, C. *Authentic Learning: A Practical Introduction & Guide for Implementation in Meridian A Middle School Computer Technologies Journal.* Downloadable at: http://www.ncsu.edu/meridian/win2003/authentic_learning/

[2]   Ontario Literacy Coalition (2005). *Making it Work: A Resource for Practitioners.* Vol. 1 p.1. Downloadable at: http://www.on.literacy.ca/workforce/vol1/vol1prac.pdf

[3]   PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs, formerly Preparatory Training Programs of Toronto, will be referred to as "PTP" throughout the report.

We hope that the report will contribute to a broader understanding of workforce literacy and provide practical information to programs that are considering initiating or extending workforce literacy programming.

Several factors have combined to support the need for a well-balanced, constructive workforce literacy approach in literacy programs in Ontario. First and foremost in Ontario is the long-standing Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS)[4] system which guides all adult literacy programming in the province and in which literacy programming is learner-centred and goal directed. For example, the LBS guidelines to which all funded literacy programs in Ontario must adhere state that, *"LBS services are now expected to demonstrate their effectiveness [by focusing] on the employment and employability needs of their clients, so that the literacy skills learned will help clients find a job, keep the job they have in a changing work environment, or be able to acquire positions with greater skills demands."*[5]

Secondly, as individual programs review and analyze the expressed needs of their students and consider what can be accomplished in the relatively short time that students remain in their program, they have realized that traditional classroom activities are not appropriate for all students. They have also realized that the incorporation of authentic tasks into programming and the integration of traditional literacy instruction with authentic tasks increase the possibility for students to achieve their goals and demonstrate success.

Thirdly, employer groups have developed a comprehensive review and some checklists of the skills that employers consider critical for the workplace.[6] These checklists are widely used by educators and adult literacy instructors as a source of information about what will be expected of students when they enter the workforce and as they progress in the workplace.

The Government of Canada through the Department of Human Resources and Social Development (HRSDC) has identified and validated nine Essential Skills.[7] The resulting Essential Skills Framework has been widely accepted by employers, labour unions and educators and plays an increasingly important role in the development of policy and practice in adult literacy in Ontario.

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[4]   The Literacy and Basic Skills program is commonly known as LBS and that acronym will be used throughout the report. LBS is basic education for adults, including reading, writing and numeracy as well as communication and self-management and self-direction. There are 5 LBS skill levels. For more information see: Ontario Literacy Coalition. *Level Description Manual.* (2000) Downloadable at: www.nald.ca/fulltext/search/.

[5]   *(LBS Program Guidelines, Appendix 6; Literacy for the Workplace 2)*

[6]   The Conference Board of Canada had developed *Employability Skills 2000+* a checklist of skills. Downloadable at: http://www.conferenceboard.ca/education/learning-tools/pdfs/esp2000.pdf

[7]   Complete details of the Essential Skills Framework can be found at the Essential Skills website http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/Understanding_ES_e.shtml

Finally adult literacy and workforce literacy programming have been influenced by a growing body of research in contextualized learning demonstrating that effective learning and effective learning transfer require more than skills acquisition. This research points to the importance of the context and culture in which learning takes place. Research findings indicate that learning is most effective and the capacity to transfer learning to other contexts is maximized when students have opportunities to actively apply developing skills and knowledge in context. The critical issue is not the possession of skills but their application.[8]

These understandings are echoed in the developing theories of literacy as social practice in which literacy is seen to be socially embedded rather than as a discrete set of skills to be taught and learned.[9]

These strands of requirements and demands, from students, literacy programs and policy makers, have necessitated the move to forms of programming that are focused on employability skills and the use of materials and tasks that reflect the everyday literacies that students are likely to use. This move is supported by research findings related to effective learning and the social nature of literacy practices. This approach has resulted in a move away from the use of traditional classroom activities and pen and paper exercises to approaches that support students in developing literacy and numeracy skills particularly in relation to employment readiness and achieving success at work.

Many LBS agencies now see workforce literacy as a key component of their program delivery. In addition to including employment related materials such as sector-specific curricula and document literacy activities, programs have found a variety of other ways to support learners with employment goals. Some programs provide opportunities for learners to work towards certification in a range of areas such as food handling, Smart Serve[10] , CPR, first aid or acquiring a driver's licence. A number of programs have set up opportunities for learners to train and practice using equipment such as cash registers. Others help learners set up volunteer and job placements to enhance their work experience.

In the course of this project it became clear that workforce literacy practices are not dissimilar from other literacy practices. Programs seek to meet the expressed needs of their students, using work related documents and tasks as the means to work with students to

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[8]   Gillespie, M. (2002)) *EFF Research to Practice Note 3*. Washington, D.C. National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) http://eff.cls.utk.edu/PDF/03research-practice.pdf

[9]   Pinsent-Johnson, C. *What does Sociocultural Learning and Literacy Look Like in an Adult Employment Preparation Program?* M.A. Thesis. University of Ottawa. 2004, p.24

[10]   Smart Serve Responsible Alcohol Service Training Program is an Ontario certification program. http://smartserve.org/company.asp

[11]   Pinsent- Johnson, C. op. cit. p.41

gain and improve literacy and numeracy skills. The overall objective is to support students to enter the workforce with an increased likelihood of success and with a firmer understanding of workplace culture, practices and requirements.[11] Ultimately, we will see that in workforce literacy, practices vary, based very much on local need, in relation to local labour market factors and student goals.

One intention of the project is to move towards providing practical support to programs that are planning to incorporate or enhance the delivery of workforce literacy in their programming. In that context a formal theoretical framework was not established against which to examine workforce literacy programming and practices to establish the efficacy and effectiveness of programming. That approach is not entirely useful in providing on the ground support to instructors and programs that are attempting to offer practical supports to students from a variety of educational backgrounds who are working towards employment goals in a variety of regional settings. One size does not fit all.

Similarly a metric was not established to measure learning gains in an individual workforce literacy program. While the outcome of such an exploration would be worthwhile in establishing a connection between a specific form of programming and demonstrable learning gains, again it does not address the complexity and variability of the experience of delivering workforce literacy within the LBS system and in relation to cultural and regional diversity, that is to say, the realities of the day-to-day in a literacy program.

The researcher is an experienced adult literacy practitioner who has worked in the PTP program for several years and has extensive experience in setting up workforce programming and in delivering literacy instruction to and supporting students who wish to move into or to re-enter the workforce. The research is informed by that experience. It is further informed by her observations and reflections on workforce literacy practice, and on formal interviews and ongoing discussions with staff and students at PTP.

Broadly speaking the theoretical underpinnings of this research project are the interrelated concepts of Authentic Learning, Situated Learning, and Contextualized Learning.

Authentic Learning[12] is based on the concept that activities and materials that are developed in the context of "real life" are more meaningful to students and therefore more likely to be effective. Situated Learning[13] is based on the two principles that first, knowledge needs to be presented in an authentic context and second, learning requires social interaction and collaboration. Learning is then understood as a function of activity,

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[12] Jacobson, E. Degener, S. & Purcell-Gates, V. (2003). *Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom*. Boston, MA. National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

[13] Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1990). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

context and culture. A Contextualized Learning[14] approach is based on the idea that effective instructional strategies and materials draw on students' experiences and immediate needs and requirements. In this approach the emphasis is on "the skills and knowledge that students need to perform tasks they have identified as important and meaningful to them 'right now' in their everyday lives. The focus is on the application rather than the possession of basic skills and knowledge."[15]

A key consideration of these types of learning environments is the transfer of knowledge from one setting to another in order to prepare adults for the successful application of their acquired skills in the future. Contextualized learning views this skills transfer as a key principle and argues that skill transfer takes place when *"the learner understands not only the facts but also the big picture*."[16] It also recognizes that learners need to develop content and procedural knowledge of the application of their skills.

Informed by substantial research and by a rich vein of evidence that contextualized learning is effective[17], this account of workforce literacy programming and practices reveals the complexities and challenges of workforce literacy instruction and learning in actual programs.

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[14] Imel, S. (1998) *Using Adult Learning Principles in Adult Basic and Literacy Education. [ERIC Clearing House on Adult, Career and Vocational Education.]* Ohio State University. College of Education. Center on Education and Training for Employment

[15] Gillespie, M. (2002)) *EFF Research to Practice Note 3*. Washington, D.C. National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) p. 1

[16] *ibid*. p.1

[17] Berry, Judy et al. (2001). *When Learners Become Teachers: How Students Can Teach Other Students about Health*. Movement for Canadian Literacy 'Learners in Action' on-line newsletter.
Gidley, Nancy and Eldred, Jan. (2005). 'A matter of respect: embedding meaningful language, literacy and numeracy in a horticultural program for students with learning difficulties and disabilities'. In *Embedded Teaching and Learning: Seven case studies of embedded provision*. London, England: National Research and Development Centre
Gillespie, M. (2002)) *EFF Research to Practice Note 3*. Washington, D.C. National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) Adult Literacy and Numeracy
Pinsent-Johnson, C. (2004) *What does Sociocultural Learning and Literacy Look Like in and Adult Employment Preparation Program*. M.A. Thesis. University of Ottawa. 2004
Purcell-Gates, Victoria et al. (1998). U.S. *Adult Literacy Program Practice: A Typology Across Dimensions of Life-Contextualised/Decontextualised and Dialogic/Monologic*. Cambridge, Mass.: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy.
Van Kraayenoord, Christina E., Karen B. Moni and Anne Jobling. (2001). *Putting it all together: Building a community of practice for learners with special needs*.
Gidley, Nancy and Eldred, Jan. (2005). 'A matter of respect: embedding meaningful language, literacy and numeracy in a horticultural program for students with learning difficulties and disabilities'. In *Embedded Teaching and Learning: Seven case studies of embedded provision*. London, England: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy

METHODOLOGY

The research framework for this project was developed by external consultants, drawing on their experience and expertise. A review of current literature was assembled in-house, informing the research further in terms of its conceptual and methodological application. The findings of the literature review greatly influenced the main researcher, a PTP instructor. The combination of external expertise in the development of a research framework and its further development by the researcher are viewed as strengths of the investigative approach employed in this study, yielding rich and contextualized results.

To further assist with the research process, an advisory committee, comprised of individuals with an understanding of workforce literacy initiatives, research in adult education and familiarity or experience with program models that include opportunities for learners to engage in work-like activities, was formed to help identify initiatives, review the data collection methodology and tools and review the draft of the final report to ensure it meets the project's objective of communicating with the LBS field. This committee met several times over the phone or face-to-face and its members were consulted individually depending on their expertise.

An environmental scan, in the form of an online survey, was sent out to all LBS agencies in Ontario. The purpose of the scan was to determine the extent to which programs have incorporated the kinds of authentic learning opportunities focused on in this report and their reasons for doing so. The survey was initially sent out as an email attachment. Due to the limited amount of completed surveys returned, an online survey was developed using Survey Monkey, a free web-based survey tool.[18] Twenty-nine agencies responded to the survey. The results of this survey led to the identification of several program initiatives to include in an in-depth environmental scan. Seven programs were selected and agreed to participate in a more in-depth review of their workforce literacy programming. These programs were selected because, although many of the responding programs reported that they incorporate hands-on activities only on an occasional basis, these six programs have developed programming that offers students hands-on learning as a regular part of their literacy program on an ongoing basis.

Information for the program descriptions of the selected initiatives was gathered primarily through telephone interviews and email correspondence and by interviews with a small number of students and staff on site by the researcher.

The researcher spent a month at each of PTP's two centres, observing team activities and conducting individual and group interviews with students, instructors and the executive

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18   Appendix C

director of the program. Data gathered informed the case study undertaken of each of PTP's two centres.

The analysis of the gathered information was informed by the findings of the literature review and the environmental scan. As an instructor in the program, the researcher was able to draw on her own experiences, recorded in a reflective journal, in the Teamwork program. Ongoing informal discussions with students and staff about their experiences with and perspectives on the program also deeply informed the case study's results and analysis.

PTP TEAMWORK CASE STUDY

The case study describes the background to the development of the Teamwork program, the structure and day-to-day activities of the program, instructor and student perspectives on the program, based on extensive interviews, and a review of the correlation of Teamwork activities with the Essential Skills Framework. The case study also includes a brief discussion of the contribution of the Teamwork program to extending a general understanding of workforce literacy issues and an overview of the successes, issues and challenges in the program.

PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs is a community based literacy provider specializing in workplace communications programming governed by a volunteer Board of Directors drawn from the community. PTP operates two sites in the city of Toronto, one in the east end of the city and the other in the west end.

Programming at PTP is focused on job-relevant learning designed to support students to develop the reading, writing, math and computer skills they need to get and keep a job. PTP has been in operation since 1992, beginning with services to unemployed workers who wanted to upgrade their literacy and numeracy skills in order to find work or to change careers.

An April 2006 "snapshot" of the student population at the PTP site in the west end of Toronto revealed that 45% are lone parents (who, with one exception, are women), another 18% cope with physical and/or mental health challenges. Among the remaining 37% are some who are involved in immigration/legal issues or have caregiver responsibilities for disabled family members.

This percentage breakdown does not take into account the reality that many students deal with multiple challenges in their daily lives. The difficulties faced by students are further compounded by numerous social and economic factors. Some students parent special

needs children or at-risk youth and the vast majority live well below the poverty line. Food insecurity and inadequate housing are ongoing concerns. Additionally, many of the students have limited work experience and a minority have none.

PTP currently offers a full range of services that can help students determine their level of ability (initial and ongoing assessment), decide on an appropriate job goal (counselling and labour market research), identify what they need to learn to handle the job (Workplace Communications Program and Teamwork) and then get ready to find that job (Job Solutions job search programs).[19]

PTP is a leader in workforce curriculum and assessment development and has published employment-focused teaching materials and assessment tools for the literacy field. PTP has developed an assessment system called C.A.M.E.R.A. (Communications and Math Employment Readiness Assessment)[20] that is used in all PTP programming. PTP has also published four volumes in the *Workwrite*[21] series, a set of instructional workbooks and teachers' guides focusing on the features and functions of workplace documents. *Workwrite* is a unique resource of materials collected from hundreds of companies in southern Ontario.

When PTP began making the transition to workforce literacy, many participants at the program had solid employment experience. As noted above, PTP was initially set up as a "labour adjustment" program – assisting workers who had recently lost their jobs develop skills for retraining. At the time, the program had a more academic, less employment-related focus. Increasingly, however, students attending PTP have had little or no work experience – or else they have been employed by agencies on short-term contracts. This fact, in combination with broader policy shifts, the inclusion of employment preparation as part of the LBS mandate, an increasing emphasis on the part of funders and policy makers on Essential Skills and workforce skill attainment resulted in a decision to initiate a more integrated workforce literacy program.

PTP is also involved in projects and research in the field of adult education that contribute to the betterment of programs and services available to literacy and language learners.

Funding

PTP has developed a broad base of funding sources since its incorporation in 1998. Its primary funders are the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (Employment

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[19]   Appendix A

[20]   An Assessment tool developed by K. Geraci for PTP.

[21]   Geraci, K. & Popovic, A. *Workwrite*, v. 1-5, (2002-2005). Toronto. Preparatory Training Program.

Ontario), Toronto Social Services, and the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (formerly National Literacy Secretariat/National Office of Literacy and Learning). As well, PTP has developed other sources of funding through its fee-for-service programs and its publishing initiatives.

Partnerships

PTP has active partnerships with the following organizations to further enhance services to clients: Alpha Plus Centre, GED Achievement, Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy, Rexdale Employment Resource Centre (Humber College), Etobicoke South Social Services, Seneca College, Labour Education Centre and George Brown College. PTP has informal partnerships with local community agencies, and is also a member of ONESTEP, Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy [MTML], Ontario Literacy Coalition [OLC], Community Literacy of Ontario [CLO], and ACTEW [A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women].

Background to the Teamwork Program

In the late 1990s, PTP began to focus its services on workforce literacy programming, that is, to focus the content of instruction on developing skills needed for the workforce. Several factors combined at that time to support this shift in program focus. One of the most significant was the change in its student population. Instead of working almost exclusively with laid-off, highly experienced workers with long term attachment to the workforce, PTP experienced dramatic increases in the number of students with limited work experience who faced multiple barriers to employment. In response to the needs of these students, PTP rethought its program design and delivery methods.

At PTP an analysis of attendance and retention statistics revealed that the average period of attendance was six months. Based on this analysis PTP staff reviewed what could be accomplished in this relatively short period of time in relation to a linear progression model whereby students progress from lower to higher levels of skill and proficiency.[22] Staff concluded that while it might not be possible for students to make significant gains in terms of level progress other kinds of gains related to employability and readiness for training might be possible.

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[22] For a description of the skill levels and an explanation of the Learning Outcomes system in operation in adult literacy in Ontario see: Ontario Literacy Coalition (2000) *The Level Descriptions Manual*. http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/levels/cover.htm

This direction was informed by the theory of Functional Context Education developed by Thomas Sticht[23] , based on research examining the integration of literacy instruction and vocational training, and concluding that adult literacy learning is most successful when taught in "real" contexts.

> ✓ "FCE focuses on (1) improving motivation by making explicit the relationship between what is being taught and its application in the contexts that the person will be functioning in after the educational program, (2) improving learning by ensuring that instruction relates to the learners' prior knowledge in such a way that the learner can function within the learning situation, (3) on improving transfer by deriving instructional contents as much as possible from the future contexts in which the person will attempt to apply the learning."[24]

The Teamwork program began in 2001. The overall aim was to set up programming that would give students the opportunity to develop literacy, numeracy and employment-related skills in a less academic, more integrated way than is possible in a traditional classroom setting. The Teamwork program was conceptualised as a way of bridging the work experience gap by providing opportunities for students to acquire knowledge of job-related responsibilities or activities by participating in "on-the-job" tasks associated with, for example, running a snack shop or planning and preparing simple meals for large groups. These activities were intended to encourage team building, job task planning and completion, and effective communication, skills that would facilitate entry or re-entry to the workforce.

When Teamwork began, instructors built upon a very simple snack-shop already operating within the program as an activity, (at the start, to meet a need for affordable snacks), and later to contextualize and integrate math, and later, communications activities. They initiated several new projects, i.e., producing a newsletter; operating a lunch program and handling orders for PTP's *Workwrite* materials.

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23   Sticht, T. G. Functional Context Education: Workshop Resource Notebook. El Cajon, CA: Applied Behavioral & Cognitive Sciences. 1997.

24   ibid. p.49

Workforce Literacy Programming

These activities became the basis of teams, chosen primarily because they were relatively easy to establish and based on an understanding that these activities would expose learners to a range of skills needed for entry-level employment (e.g., in the shipping/receiving, warehouse, retail, customer service and food service sectors). An effort was also made to draw on the strengths and interests of instructors. For instance, the researcher was assigned to the Food Team based on her experience as a cook. Each group was provided with start-up money to purchase supplies and basic equipment such as a digital camera and a crock-pot.

Instructors have, over the last six years, developed the program through trial and error, experimenting with a variety of formats. Initially, since this was a new venture for all staff, all instructors were provided an opportunity to team teach. As they gained experience and as interests diverged or solidified, instructors chose to work on their own, each leading a different team.

Another early team activity, providing bookkeeping support for the snack shop, was abandoned as staff concluded that learning basic accounting concepts was too theoretical an activity and provided too few opportunities for students to engage in real applications. It also excluded lower level literacy students from participation because of the reading demands. One aspect of the program that has remained consistent is the integration of students from different LBS levels in each team.

Through this kind of experimentation, instructors have concluded that teams have most success where they are involved in producing a real product or service and where the focus is broad enough to incorporate a range of tasks.

Teamwork complements PTP's Workplace Communications program, a full-time literacy and basic skills program designed to support students to meet the demands of the workplace. Teamwork allows students to apply the literacy and numeracy skills they are working on in the classroom to real-life work situations. To be eligible for PTP's program, students should have employment as a near or long term goal, be 19 years or older, have a Grade 12 education or less and be able to commit to a full-time upgrading program in reading, writing, math and computer skills.

Students may not have a specific employment goal when they enter the program. In general, their long-term goal is to find work but often students are not sure of what kind this might be. Part of the work of PTP is to help students determine an occupational goal, one that may or may not require further training.

The program operates on a continuous intake model; students enter the program throughout the year. Students are assessed on entry, at regular intervals throughout the program and

upon exit. Individualized training plans are created for each student and adjusted as needed by students in collaboration with assessors and program staff.

PTP has developed and continuously refines student support strategies by:
- evaluating program relevance so as to modify program content and delivery in a timely manner
- refining feedback mechanisms to help students monitor progress and set goals
- providing referrals, advocacy and one-on-one support
- maintaining phone and email contact with students who are absent
- delivering a food program including provision of breakfast foods and weekly lunches prepared by students as part of Teamwork

Teamwork – How it Works and its Integration with PTP's LBS and Employment Services

Teamwork is a component of and essentially complements the Workplace Communications Program, PTP's full-time literacy and basic skills program. The two go hand in hand. Each student joins a team upon entry to the program. Students choose the team they want to participate in. Their decision may be based on a job goal or other personal goal (e.g. wanting to improve cooking skills) or viewed as a way to develop particular literacy/numeracy skills (e.g., writing skills, money handling).

Students spend five mornings and two afternoons each week in class. Two afternoons each week are spent in Teamwork activities. Classroom activities are connected to, but not directly correlated with, team activities while team activities support instructional activities in the classroom. Each of these programming approaches is informed by the other.

Instructors actively look for and generate opportunities in the literacy and basic skills classes for students to apply and practice skills in authentic ways. For example, planning the annual picnic was carried out in the classroom. Students created posters, communicated with program administrators by email, made brief presentations to students and staff, held a vote to choose a location and budgeted for the event.

In addition, Occupational Research in which students use online and other resources to find information about jobs, training and volunteer opportunities is a critical component of PTP's program.

Occupational Research as it is conceptualised at PTP does not focus on job-searching, resume writing or interview skills. It is real occupational research and involves knowledge

building. A sample exercise is to have students collectively think about the kinds of questions they should ask themselves, trainers, employers and others in order to be able to make an informed decision about whether to invest in a particular training course. They are then asked to find the answers to the questions they formulated. The result may be that what at first seemed appealing is less so on closer examination. These activities are carried out in the classroom and are essential to the success of students as they move on to employment or further training.

The work that students undertake in the Occupational Research component is also an important source of information for instructors about the employment/job goals of students. This information informs classroom activities, curriculum development and important areas to be addressed in the various teams.

When students move on to the Job Solutions Employment Services[25] component of the PTP program they must identify a specific job goal. The Occupational Research component of the Workplace Communications Program provides students with information that allows them to identify realistic employment goals based on an understanding of job requirements and further education and training needs.

PTP students attend workshops and have Job Solutions staff visit their classrooms on a regular basis. hese visits are intended to help students develop an early rapport with Job Solutions staff so that the move from upgrading to job search is less intimidating.

Job Solutions is specifically designed to meet the needs of job seekers who face literacy or language challenges. Resources used have been modified to be accessible to this group. Further accommodations are achieved by offering a longer than usual program (12 weeks in duration), one that also allows students enrolled in the Workplace Communications program to integrate job search and upgrading—preferably towards the end of their upgrading program.

Through Job Solutions[26], PTP sets up on site job fairs for students, and information about Job Fairs at other locations is shared with students who are encouraged to attend either alone or in a group organized by PTP staff or Teamwork members.

To support students on their path to employment, training or further education, assessments are conducted using CAMERA[27]. Since CAMERA allows students to track their progress in four areas – document use, reading text, numeracy and writing – they can easily identify

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[25] Appendix A

[26] Job Solutions is one of a range of programs at PTP – for more details see Appendix A

[27] The Communications and Math Employment Readiness Assessment developed by K.Geraci for PTP.

strengths and weaknesses. Initial placement assessments are carried out at intake. Follow up assessments are usually conducted five weeks after enrolment and eight weeks following that assessment. Assessments are also conducted when a student exits the program. After every CAMERA, students meet with a staff member to discuss results, to reflect on their progress as well as to address concerns. These meetings are also an opportunity to map routes to attaining individual job related goals. They are also an occasion to inventory, list and track job readiness basics, for example, that the student is legally eligible to work, has a social insurance number and a bank account.

Signposts[28] are an additional feature of the assessment process at PTP. Signposts are used as an in-class assessment, administered and marked by the instructor. (In contrast, CAMERA is administered by non-teaching staff, to avoid "teaching to the test".) Signposts assessments were developed to provide instructors with an assessment tool to be used in the intervals between CAMERA evaluations. Signposts also provide success markers for students who may not be able to achieve level completion.

Students receive Certificates marking progression from LBS level to level. PTP supplies employer reference on request, although this is infrequent and there is no formal process in place.

Using MTCU's outcomes based model, PTP has consistently achieved a 70% success rate. In other words, 70% of students go on either to employment, training, job search, further education or volunteer work. At PTP, however, success is marked not only in terms of outcomes. Offering an appropriate referral, helping to foster a feeling of belonging and self-worth, building confidence and providing a sense of direction are as important. New students are often referred by former students, and former students may return to the program when their circumstances change.

TEAMWORK ACTIVITIES

Teams are organized around four core activities: operating a snack shop, preparing and selling a weekly lunch, publishing a newsletter and organizing school events and outings.

The Teamwork program provides opportunities for students to bring the skills worked on in the classroom into a real life situation in their teams.

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[28] The Communications and Math Employment Readiness Assessment and Signposts developed by K.Geraci and Marisa Mazzulla for PTP

Workforce Literacy Programming

The Teamwork program is organized around specific tasks allowing students to repeat the same task many times. This opportunity for repetition is critically important in supporting students to practice and apply skills and knowledge they have worked on in the classroom.

Snack Shop

The snack shop involves students in a range of activities encountered in operating or working in a small retail business.

Stock Management

Students shop at a local grocery store and do on-line ordering, receive deliveries, check invoices, keep track of receipts and restock shelves.

Staffing

Students sign up to staff the snack shop. A shift involves setting up and closing the shop, serving customers, following procedures such as recording product loss or coffee sales and using either a cash register, point-of-sale system or cash box to cash out customers.

Bookkeeping

Students are involved in some simple bookkeeping tasks such as maintaining a cash record, filling out requisition and banking forms, and creating invoices for items bought on credit.[29] Students are responsible for taking inventory and doing a cash count on a regular basis (e.g., daily, bi-weekly). They also work on taking inventory, reconciling cash receipts,

Inventory Control and Reconciliation

ordering, receiving and verifying deliveries involving the use of a database, data entry and invoice control.

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[29] A 'community account' at a local bank has been set up for team banking needs.

Food Program

A weekly "Thursday Lunch" is prepared and served to students and staff by members of the Food Team. The Food Team engages students in a range of tasks that would be encountered in running a small meal program in a school, community centre or day care centre.

Menu Creation and Nutrition Research

Students research health and nutrition topics, locate appropriate recipes and make decisions about and write up the lunch menu.

Planning

Students identify the jobs that need to be done and create a work plan to ensure tasks are carried out.

Cost Estimation and Shopping

Students make a shopping list, estimate expenses and shop for ingredients at a nearby grocery store.

Food Preparation, Serving and Sales

Students prepare, serve and sell the lunch (for $1.00).

Budgeting and Money Management

The lunch program at each centre receives a small stipend out of PTP's budget ($10 a week)[30] to help offset costs. Students manage this money as well as any profit made from the lunch sales. They save and record shopping receipts and invoices and keep records of purchases and sales.

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[30] PTP has set up a special fund, named in the memory of Nancy Jackman, who first set up a snack shop and inventory system at PTP as part of her math class. The fund was started with honorariums paid to staff for work done on other projects such as field-testing and providing feedback on materials in development. PTP has made a commitment to top-up the Nancy Fund each year out of the program's budget to ensure its viability. The money is used to support the lunch program and a free 'breakfast table' at the school.

Publicity, Customer Satisfaction Survey

Students also undertake special projects related to running the lunch program, such as creating menu notices and conducting surveys.

Safe Food Handling

The Food Handler Certification study guide from the City of Toronto Department of Public Health is used as a reference for learning about and incorporating proper food handling methods into the program's kitchen practices.

Events Planning

The Events Planning Team involves students in a variety of tasks, including planning, research, budgeting and communications activities. Students gather information related to fares, schedules, maps and directions, using the Internet or by making telephone or written inquiries. Students use email to request information and consult with others about arrangements. To promote their events, students produce posters, sign-up sheets, bulletin board displays and information packages. They also make announcements at the school's weekly centre meeting. To log their activities, EventsTeam students have also used a web log.

Students in this team organize:

Field Trips to employment and community service fairs, training centres, and public institutions such as the provincial legislature.

Guest Speakers from community legal clinics, community health organizations and tenants' associations, as well as former PTP students.

Social Events including potluck lunches, holiday celebrations and the annual school picnic.

Newsletter

The focus in the Newsletter Team is on developing writing, computer and group work skills.

Job Task Planning

Students plan the content of the newsletter and decide how work will be organized and how tasks are to be assigned.

Research

Students conduct interviews and look for information on the Internet.

Writing and Editing

Students write and edit all content for the newsletter.

Technical Skills

Students are involved in some of the technical aspects of producing a newsletter, for example, layout, copying, collation and distribution.

Computer Use

Students use a computer for word processing and formatting articles. Students also use a computer to produce surveys, charts and graphs, post articles on a web log, create photo stories and submit work through email attachments.

Equipment Use

Students make use of a digital camera and tape recorder in the preparation of content for the newsletter.

Printing and Distribution

Students organize and carry out the photocopying, collating and distribution of the newsletter.

WHAT DO INSTRUCTORS AT PTP THINK ABOUT THE TEAMWORK PROGRAM?

All instructors in the PTP program were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed and analysed and synthesized into the following topic areas:

Applying skills

Instructors see the Teamwork program as a context in which students apply and practice the math, reading and writing and document use, oral language and computer skills they are

learning in their regular literacy and basic skills classes. The Teamwork program also provides opportunities to create and support a learning environment that encourages peer learning, informal learning and the development of a community of practice. This environment is similar to that found in many workplaces in which learning often takes place in real time, based on the need to deal with immediate problems, to learn new processes and procedures and to make adjustments when change is required.

In this context self-direction is a critical skill area for students who want to enter or re-enter the workforce. In the Teamwork learning environment students are given opportunities and actively encouraged to direct their own learning. Students are encouraged to reflect on what has been learned and what needs to be learned in the process of routine tasks such as meeting deadlines, providing services, editing, writing, costing and working with others. This action/reflection model has been identified as an effective means to support the development of self-awareness and self-direction.[29]

Whereas some LBS programs have an explicit self-management/self-direction component, PTP uses Teamwork as a forum for students to experiment with these principles and to put them into action in a safe, meaningful context. The PTP approach is learning by doing and reflecting on work carried out.

Instructors noted that teaching teamwork, organizational, problem solving and communication skills in relation to real tasks makes more sense than attempting to teach these through workbook exercises. Real problems arise and students have to work within real constraints. For example, evaluating the success of an event or doing some form of self-evaluation in relation to a task provides opportunities to help students develop the kinds of skills such an exercise intends to teach.

As one instructor commented, "You don't need an exercise on 'performance reviews' because you actually carry out the performance review."

Developing Employability/Essential Skills

Instructors reported that they see Teamwork as a context in which students develop the employability or "soft skills" needed for work, e.g., being able to work both independently and as part of a team, learning to take initiative, demonstrating responsibility and task

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[31] Grieve, K. (2004) Supporting Learning, Supporting Change: A Research Project on Self-Mmanagement and Self-Direction: A Field Report. Toronto, ON: Ontario Literacy Coalition
http://www.on.literacy.ca/pubs/smsdfld/p28.htm

commitment, responding flexibly to change, solving problems, thinking practically, managing time, developing leadership skills, remembering routines, and developing better interpersonal skills. Providing opportunities for students to take part in work activity within the school setting also allows students to develop employability skills by working alongside other students and instructors, who serve as role models.

Recognizing Learning

Instructors noted that it is often easier in the team environment than in the regular classroom to see how a student's skills come together. The skills that help students succeed are also sometimes more easily identified through team activities. For instance, it is apparent in the team environment that some students are able to learn successfully in a range of contexts – in a group or partner situation, through taking part in a focused discussion or working independently. Instructors also thought teams provide opportunities for students to use different learning styles and demonstrate abilities not always showcased in a classroom setting. Several gave examples of students who struggle to stay on task in the classroom but shine in teams.

Confidence Building

Instructors also noted that teams help students learn to approach tasks and situations more flexibly. One instructor described this as "breaking down notions of 'I don't do X'" – take part in a group or volunteering for tasks and activities, for example. Instructors also observed that the team structure helps students to develop greater tolerance for working with people with a range of abilities and work styles, as well as a greater tolerance for cultural difference.

Like students, instructors see the environment created in teams as one in which it is safe for students to take risks in their learning. Several pointed out that for some students speaking in front of a group for the first time or working at the snack shop is a significant marker of progress. Working at the snack shop, students are often nervous about making mistakes, not being able to calculate the correct change, or not being able to carry out transactions quickly enough.

The team setting provides a safe environment in which to try. The pace is slower and there is room for failure. As one instructor commented, "You're not going to be fired if your money doesn't match up." The team setting also gives students a chance to attempt specific job-related learning like operating the cash register or using a piece of equipment such as a price scanner or fax machine, doing inventory or kitchen prep work. Students often want a

chance to try these skills out before attempting them on a job and teams provide these opportunities.

In summary, instructors at PTP described a wide range of workplace skills gained by students in the Teamwork environment. These include, planning and organizational skills and processes; learning to think practically; developing communication skills, particularly speaking/listening skills; giving and receiving information and feedback; learning how to participate, to take the initiative; learning how to work in pairs and groups including how to participate in meetings and committees. Instructors also described a range of other critical learning and life skills and learning opportunities in the program including task commitment, getting the job done on time; specific practical skills such as, budgeting; operating a cash register; remembering routines/memory skills; computer skills; design skills; cooking; reading; writing; filling in forms; applying math skills.

Issues

While instructors report that they like running teams, they also talked about some of the challenges of teaching in this environment.

Since the skills and attributes that help to ensure that team activities are a success are also those that the Teamwork program intends to develop, accomplishing the work of teams is sometimes challenging. Teams rely, for instance, on students being able to generate good ideas, anticipate and solve problems, demonstrate a willingness to volunteer for tasks and an ability to commit to projects over a period of time. Yet, students often have difficulty in these areas. This can present a real challenge, especially when, as one of the instructors who works with students to prepare the weekly lunch points out, "You know that there's this task to be done."

Sometimes instructors find themselves picking up the slack, doing the shopping or filling in at the snack shop when no one volunteers or a student has forgotten to do their job. In addition, fluctuating attendance and the fact that the program operates on a continuous intake basis can mean that, as another instructor put it, "You lose people who have an idea of what the team is all about."

This can make it difficult to sustain the momentum of the group – sometimes teams are a hive of activity while at other times instructors have to work hard to keep students engaged.

Instructors see the teams as offering the possibility for creating an environment in which students can be self-directed in their learning. Achieving this ideal, however, is often

difficult. Several talked of wanting students to "own" the activities of their teams yet finding this attitude hard to instil.

Adequately supporting learning is also a challenge. Another instructor observed that sometimes she has to juggle getting the lunch made in a timely manner with allowing adequate time for students to solve the problems that arise:
 "That's been a big challenge, to step back and let students think for themselves when I know that time's running out."

WHAT DO STUDENTS AT PTP THINK ABOUT THE TEAMWORK PROGRAM?

 All students in the program were invited to be interviewed and those who volunteered to participate were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed, analysed and synthesized under the following topics:

Skills and Knowledge

Students report that what they value most about taking part in the Teamwork program is the opportunity to acquire practical skills and knowledge through the team activities. In the interviews, students often talked about the teams in terms of what they learn to do. They identified skills such as learning how to operate the cash register and using the bar code scanner, improving their cooking skills, learning how to do inventory, keep books, use the internet, read recipes or organize files as important.

Students also reported that they valued teams as a way to acquire information that is meaningful and relevant to their daily lives. For example, students identified learning about health and nutrition in the Food Team or finding out about community services in the Newsletter or Events Team as particularly useful and relevant. One student said that practicing these skills at school means knowing "how to apply them later." Another said,

> 66   99   "it's like a skill, this is like an everyday skill that you need for your job."

Workforce Literacy Programming

Real Work Experience

Some students related what they were learning in the Teamwork program to prior work experience and the kinds of challenges and expectations they had encountered. For instance, one student who had helped run the snack shop and plan events talked about feeling better prepared to handle conflict on the job. Others said they value the team experience because they see it as relevant to the kind of work they want to do in the future or because they see it as helping them figure out what they want to do.

A student who maintained expense records for the snack shop said:

> " " "It's kind of rewarding because when I do get into the job that I want, I know that some of the stuff that I'm doing right now, I know that it's going to help me....keeping track of the bank statements and all the money that we get in from the store and stuff, like being able to...just knowing how to keep the records and knowing how to file all these different things."

Confidence Building

Students also value the team activities as a way to build self-confidence. Acquiring practical skills was often associated with having the confidence to look for a job. Students like having opportunities to attempt skills they see as marketable, learning the cash register was an often cited example, in a setting where they know they can learn at their own pace and where mistakes are acceptable and do not result in negative consequences. Some students talked about activities such as group discussions or making announcements as situations that helped themselves and others develop the confidence to speak up in a group.

Fear of making mistakes and shyness were identified as real barriers to participation at school, on the job and in other settings. One student, who reported that he wasn't always sure what was socially appropriate, reflected that working in the snack shop helped him to "find out the mistakes that you can make."

By learning ways to recognize and avoid making these kinds of mistakes, he said,

> " " "that butterfly in your stomach goes away"

Knowing that others make mistakes or are similarly held back by shyness, and having a chance to "do things over and over" helped him learn and become more confident.

Interpersonal Skills

Developing skills around working with other people was also widely valued. Several students cited working cooperatively in a multicultural environment and learning to be more adaptable as important. One student,who worked as part of the Newsletter Team, said that the experience helped him develop more tolerance towards others and to develop better teamwork skills. The Teamwork environment, he reported:

> " " "...helps you cope with other people, helps you deal with people, helps you deal with their views.... In Newsletter, we did that a lot, confrontation of what one thought and the other thought, and that's good because you need that in this world of work nowadays—you need to be able to listen to other people's points of view, other than just your own all the time. It helped me on that.... Now I'm more collaborative with other people. Before I came to school, when I was working, sometimes I wouldn't take people's points of view, I was very hard-headed, but now I'm more open-minded. Newsletter helped me broaden my mind a bit on other people's opinions.... In any job you should have input from other people, you've got to be flexible. "

Planning and Organizing

Developing skills around working with other people was also widely valued. Several students cited working cooperatively in a multicultural environment and learning to be more adaptable as important. One student,who worked as part of the Newsletter Team, said that the experience helped him develop more tolerance towards others and to develop better teamwork skills. The Teamwork environment, he reported:

> " " "I think the Newsletter Team really helps people put projects together."

Another student on the same team described how the group planned together: "We bring ideas, then we bring it out—like we send memos, all those things. So like if maybe we have a plan, like a plan to go to Wonderland, after we bring it out, share it with the rest of the class, [we ask the others] 'what do you think about this?'"

A student involved in running the snack shop, compared working in her team where students planned together and discussed how to make improvements at the shop with the kind of team-based work organization she had experienced at a previous job. Students generally thought that learning how to make decisions and carry out tasks as part of a group was a good thing:

> " " "People come together to make decisions and agree on things."

Real Life Skills

Several students reported that practices like keeping track of receipts, budgeting, and using price comparison information like unit pricing had carried over into their home practices. Some also identified differences in relation to practices connected with activities they engaged in both at home and in their teams – cooking or shopping, for instance.

> " " "When you cook at home you just take the money and go shopping. Here you have to budget",

A student with experience cooking in various jobs and for her family also pointed out this home/school difference:

> " " "The things that we do at home are completely different to when you might do them somewhere else. At home we will just—when cooking something—say, 'oh that will be enough.' Here we measure; we make sure it's the amount. When we go out now, we won't say, 'oh this will be enough or that will be enough.' No, you go by the amount."

Students also talked about liking the kind of community environment the teams help to create at the school. They enjoy having events, reading the newsletter and they appreciate the value, convenience and community atmosphere of lunch day and the snack shop. Several stressed the importance of having an opportunity to contribute something to the school. Activities like preparing and serving the lunch or organizing and fundraising for an event were valued as ways to contribute.

Learning from Each Other

Several students working at lower LBS levels reported that they liked having opportunities to work with students from other levels and on tasks that are more complex than those they are ordinarily exposed to in their regular LBS classes.

One LBS level 2 student working on the Events Team said that what she liked most about being in the team was working with students from levels 4 and 5 on tasks such as using the internet to gather information or creating sign-up sheets and posters. She contrasted these kinds of activities with learning in a class composed of students at lower levels of reading skill, where she finds listening to readers struggling with decoding skills sometimes tedious.

Beyond Literacy Learning

Another level 2 student in the Events Team liked working at tasks that he wasn't assigned to do in his regular LBS class, such as using the computer to create posters to promote events. A student on the Newsletter Team talked about the importance of having opportunities to explore social issues that touch students' lives:

> " " "Newsletter, it's different from class, understand? The difference is this, you talk about yourself, you write about yourself, you listen to other people, they bring ideas...We write about homelessness—in my class, we don't teach about homelessness or those things...We do different things [in newsletter] – about shelters, welfare, hospitality, health care... We make something for the rest to read, we write it, we make articles for the rest to read."

Nearly all students saw team activities as relevant in a general way and recognized the ways in which these activities helped them to develop skills. Students didn't always, however, recognise team activities as relevant for themselves. Some students pointed to the benefits of activities like running the snack shop, cooking or learning how to do inventory as more useful for other students – those who they saw as needing to develop the particular skills focused on in the team or those with related job goals.

 For students who saw themselves as benefiting by participating on a team, it didn't appear to make a difference whether or not they already had experience in the activities they were involved in. Those with no experience felt they were getting skills and those with experience often felt the team was a place to show leadership, contribute to the school or

help other students acquire skills. Some also felt the experience helped them to develop a deeper understanding of their work.

Students tended to perceive some team activities as more directly related to learning LBS skills than others. The Inventory Team, for example, was often described as a context for developing math skills. Participating on the Newsletter Team was seen as a way to improve writing skills. These perceptions were generally held both by students in those particular teams and on other teams. One student said of the Newsletter Team, for instance,

> " " "It helps you on your writing and everything because we always have to write, always have to write."

Another student felt that the writing she produced in the newsletter team was better than writing she produced in the classroom. She said that one reason for this was because she generally developed a piece of writing over a longer period of time in the Newsletter Team than when writing for a class assignment. Another said that in the Newsletter Team it was important to do good work "because you know they're going to put it on the Internet."

Students also talked about how the environment created in the Teamwork program affects their learning. A member of the Events Team, observed that,

> " " "When you're in the team you feel a little freer to explore."

She also felt that in teams, students' interactions with one another were different. In her view, teams emphasize peer learning – "students helping students" – and learning to negotiate with one another, as part of decision-making, planning and problem solving. Others indicated that learning as part of a group helped them understand what they were supposed to do. For example, one student said, "We work as a team, you know. That is what helped me to know what I'm doing." Several students talked about their difficulties with concentration and focus, indicating that the teams helped to remove some of the pressure associated with classroom learning.

Some students reported that keeping busy, having a mix of activities, breaking into groups or pairs to get work done kept them focused and on task. For instance, "I think that's what makes our class, our team, more interesting, more fun, because you're not just doing one thing…we've got different things to do, like even though I do the invoices, when I'm done that, I do something else." This student thought that being assigned a clearly defined task

and knowing the instructor would be checking in with her helped her to stay focused and be productive.

Issues

For the most part, negative feedback about the teams wasn't directly reported in the interviews. A few students talked about hearing from others that teams are boring or that students don't feel they need to take teams as seriously as regular LBS classes. Several students said that they came to PTP because they wanted to do GED prep and would prefer structured, academic classes. They see getting their GED as a step towards better employment, since completion of high school is a requirement for many jobs. These students didn't think the Teamwork program should be eliminated, only that they would like an alternative to run concurrently.

Some students did report feeling lost in their team and in need of more direction from the instructor. As one student said, "I didn't know how to do it, what to do – the instructions, you know? I guess I need more coaching. I don't know about everybody else, everybody else seemed okay." Some students reported being not entirely sure why they were placed in the team they were in and suggested that it would be helpful if PTP could find a better way of explaining the program at intake.

HOW DOES THE TEAMWORK PROGRAM SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS?

The Essential Skills framework is a fundamental reference point for the Teamwork program. As such, the Essential Skills framework is taken into account in all Teamwork activities and tasks. Teamwork provides valuable "real-life" opportunities for students to apply and practice those skills, beyond the practical skills, that will enable them to have a greater chance of success in gaining and retaining employment.

On the following pages are brief descriptions aligning the types of activities and tasks that students engage in the Teamwork program with the nine Essential Skills.

Workforce Literacy Programming

ESSENTIAL SKILLS[32]	TEAMWORK ACTIVITIES
Reading Text	**Reading Text**
Reading Text refers to reading material that is in the form of sentences or paragraphs.	Many Teamwork activities engage students in 'reading to do.' Students read a variety of instructional texts including recipes, equipment manuals, and notes containing instructions. They also read in order to apply information to their own work practices. For example, students in the Food Team read and apply information contained in the Food Handler manual. Students in the Snack Shop Team read about customer service.
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;	Students read (and write) emails, memos, letters and handwritten notes. Students working at the snack shop read notes left by other team members. Students in the Inventory Team read entries made on the inventory sheet (e.g., an explanation for why cash is over/under). Students in all teams read memos containing announcements or information sent by other teams (e.g., an announcement about a field trip). Students also engage in proof-reading the work of their peers (e.g., memos, newsletter articles, surveys, etc.)
Print and non-print media (for example, texts on computer screens and microfiche);	
Paragraph-length text in charts, tables and graphs.	
Document Use	Team tasks also engage students in 'reading to learn.' Newsletter Team students read as part of researching a story idea. Students in the Events Team read up on places or events as part of planning school activities. Students in the Food Team read to learn about health and nutrition. Students are encouraged to read as a way to stay or become informed about subjects relating to the work of their team.
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, blueprints, schematics, drawings, signs and labels are documents used in the world of work.	
	Document Use
Document Use includes: Print and non-print media (for example, computer screen or microfiche documents, equipment gauges, clocks and flags);	Students create and/or use a range of documents typical of the workplace including: Product labels, price lists, menus, inventory and cash count form, product shrinkage sheet, record of new stock, shift schedule, price look up (PLU) sheet, staff credit sheet, petty cash requisition form, cash record (money paid out/money received), delivery invoices, data base (e.g., for the online grocery store), activity logs, templates (e.g., used to create monthly calendar), surveys (online and print based), maps (online and print based), directories (online and print based; e.g., 211/411 online), special event sign-up sheets, Gantt charts, graphs (e.g., for the newsletter), spreadsheets (e.g., to create invoices).
Reading/interpreting and writing/completing/producing of documents; the use of these two.	
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.	

[32]   Description of the Essential Skills is taken from the Essential Skills Reader's Guide. Downloadable at: http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/Help_section8.shtml

ESSENTIAL SKILLS	TEAMWORK ACTIVITIES
Numeracy **Numeracy** refers to the workers' use of numbers and their being required to think in quantitative terms.	Team tasks expose students to basic applications in the four key numeracy areas identified in the Essential Skills framework – money math; scheduling and budgeting math; measurement and calculation math; and data analysis. When planning meals, students in the Food Team estimate the number of potential customers and multiply recipes to produce the required number of servings. Students learn units of measurement and simple conversions. They measure ingredients using a variety of measuring tools and scales, including measuring cups, a dial type kitchen scale and a digital scale. Shopping for ingredients, students develop consumer math skills such as estimating shopping expenses, using unit pricing information to calculate best buys, understanding nutrition information on packaging (e.g., percentage of daily nutrient requirements, calculating number of servings in a package) and identifying taxable and non-taxable items. Students in this team also manage time to complete tasks according to schedule. Working at the snack shop students use money handling skills such as mentally calculating total of purchases; counting money; making change; knowing and remembering prices; and comparing prices for best buys during shopping. Students record and check numerical information. Following the snack shop schedule helps reinforce the skills of reading and calculating time. In order to track inventory, students count items on hand, compare current and previous totals to determine items sold; calculate money that should have been collected and compare it to the cash count. The team adds new stock to existing stock and records new totals. Completing the inventory and cash count form allows students to practice and reinforce whole number operations and improve accuracy. Students in this team also read and use numerical information in a variety of settings (e.g., when checking delivery invoices; by recording information tracked on various forms at the snack shop). Running the snack shop and lunch program as well as planning events involve budgeting math. Students learn concepts such as cash flow and develop practices related to budgeting such as saving receipts and invoices and keeping a record of income and expenses. Students in the Newsletter and Events Teams conduct surveys, analyse the results and create graphs using the data collected.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS	TEAMWORK ACTIVITIES
Writing **Writing** includes: Writing texts and writing in documents (for example, filling in forms) Non-paper-based writing (for example, typing on a computer) The Essential Skills Framework identifies the following purposes for writing: To organize or remind; To keep a record, to document information or a problem; To inform, explain or request information; To justify a request, To present an evaluation, analysis or comparison.	Team activities set up opportunities for students to write for the kinds of purposes associated with writing on the job. For instance, making lists, taking notes, using checklists, keeping records and logs, and developing procedural writing. Students also write to propose ideas, make requests or gather information. Team tasks involve writing for various audiences – students, staff and program administrators at PTP and, occasionally, people in the community – and they provide exposure to a range of genres such as memos, letters, notes, emails, questionnaires, and notices. In the Newsletter Team, students engage in a variety of writing tasks, drafting, editing, spell checking and rewriting. Students develop a piece of writing over a longer period of time than in the classroom and so have many opportunities to work on basic writing skills and on composition skills. Students in the Food Team word process recipes with multiplied measurements for future reference; instructions often need to be modified to take account of the facilities and equipment available (this leads to drafting, editing and rewriting). The Inventory Team uses tables/forms to store and convey information. The Food Team uses a range of forms to communicate within the program, e.g., memos, emails and notices. The students also write product names on shopping lists; create flyers and brochures using computers and other resources.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS	TEAMWORK ACTIVITIES
Oral Communication **Oral Communication** pertains primarily to the use of speech to give and exchange thoughts and information by workers in an occupational group.	The Teamwork setting provides opportunities for students to develop formal and informal oral communication skills. Because team activities are ongoing (e.g. running the snack shop and lunch program; events planning), with new members joining at any time, students have regular opportunities to explain the work of their team and its purpose to others. Students participate in orienting/training new team members (e.g., at the snack shop) and have frequent opportunities to teach a skill they have learned to another team member (e.g., how to use email; how to operate the cash register). Students practice a range of job-specific communication skills: answering customer enquiries; giving/confirming information (e.g., when filling in the inventory form); directing a task (e.g., directing kitchen work). They practice speaking in large and small groups. In all teams, students take part in discussions, as part of planning and evaluating activities. These are occasions for presenting ideas, posing questions, asking for and giving feedback. Each PTP centre holds a weekly 'centre meeting'. Students take turns facilitating this meeting. They may also make announcements or deliver a short presentation at the centre meeting. Often, communication skills are rehearsed in one setting before employed in another. For instance, students practice what they will say before going to another team to make an announcement or ask a question (e.g., to ask people to fill in a survey). Students in the Newsletter Team practice their roles (e.g., interviewer, note taker, photographer) before conducting an interview. Students who work at the snack shop practice using the cash register and serving customers by engaging in role-play when the shop is closed. Talking about work experience and identifying transferable skills - important job search and interview skills – are often difficult for students. Activities such as producing a presentation or skit about their team helps students identify and talk about the skills and experience they have developed in their teams. For students for whom English is a second language, the Teamwork program provides valuable speaking and listening practice.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS	TEAMWORK ACTIVITIES
Working with Others **Working with Others** examines the extent to which employees work with others to carry out their tasks. For example, Do they have to work co-operatively with others? Do they have to have the self-discipline to meet work targets while working alone?	Consultation and collaboration are key features of the learning environment created in teams. Students are exposed to a variety of participatory practices. Students engage in brainstorming ideas in a group and group decision making (voting, consensus building) on a regular basis. Students have multiple opportunities to speak in a group, to take part in meeting situations (leading/facilitating a discussion, making an announcement); in committee work; and in training others. These activities are important since they are often new experiences for students and allow students the opportunity to practice giving/receiving feedback, giving explanations, asking questions; dividing tasks, taking instructions from others. Students also learn to approach tasks flexibly, work with people with different work styles and resolve conflicts when these occur.
Continuous Learning **Continuous Learning** examines the requirement for workers in an occupational group to participate in an ongoing process of acquiring skills and knowledge. **Continuous Learning** tests the hypothesis that more and more jobs require continuous upgrading, and that all workers must continue learning in order to keep or to grow with their jobs. If this is true, then the following will become essential skills: Knowing how to learn; Understanding one's own learning style; and, Knowing how to gain access to a variety of materials, resources and learning opportunities.	Teams engage students in continuous learning. Students are encouraged to look for ways to make improvements to work processes and practices and to reflect on questions such as: "What worked well? What didn't work? What could we do differently?" For example, students in the Events Team often make a blog post summarizing an activity. This allows time for introspection and a chance to discuss what went well and what didn't as well as time to reflect on the team's approach. Talking about what happens is an important way for students to articulate and recognize their own learning. Team activities promote knowledge-building. For example, as part of running the snack shop and food program, students have opportunities to learn more about health, nutrition and safe food-handling. In writing a newsletter article or planning an event students learn how to carry out research.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS	TEAMWORK ACTIVITIES
Thinking Skills **Thinking Skills** differentiates between six different types of cognitive functions. However, these functions are interconnected. These six functions are: Problem Solving Decision Making Critical Thinking Job Task Planning and Organizing Significant Use of Memory Finding Information	Tasks and activities in teams reproduce many of the challenges students face in the workplace such as working under pressure (e.g., line up at the snack shop or during lunch service), needing to correct mistakes and trouble-shoot problems, having to assess what to do when things don't go as planned, and being able to resolve conflicts with others. Students also have to work within real constraints such as getting the meal prepared on time or planning according to a budget. They need to find ways to work accurately and efficiently and assess the quality of work produced. Team tasks are integrated and often involve systems learning. Carrying out a task may require reference to one or more texts. In order to fill out the inventory and cash count form, for instance, students need to gather data from a variety of sources (e.g., record of new stock, delivery invoices, staff credit sheet, product shrinkage sheet or coffee sales book), and cross-reference information in order to confirm amounts or understand discrepancies. Some tasks require mainly that students learn to recognize and follow procedures already in place, often as part of a routine (e.g., taking inventory; working at the snack shop; invoicing customers). In other cases, students need to identify and prioritize the tasks that need to be done, assign responsibilities, and determine the resources they will need (e.g., organizing an event; planning and preparing a meal). In some situations they may need to devise a process or create the documents necessary for carrying out their work (e.g., a sign-up sheet; posters; surveys). Hands-on tasks such as preparing food, operating the cash register, serving customers, putting away orders, setting up displays or collating the newsletter allow for a focus on the development of spatial and temporal organization. Other activities provide opportunities to work on memory skills. To work at the snack shop students need to remember routines (e.g., opening/closing the shop; taking inventory), procedures (e.g., recording product shrinkage) and product prices and codes. Students working on projects carried out over an extended period of time need to be able to recall where they are in their work process (e.g., those tasks that have been accomplished and those that remains to be done).

ESSENTIAL SKILLS	TEAMWORK ACTIVITIES
Computer Use **Computer Use** indicates the variety and complexity of computer use within the occupational group.	Team activities expose students to a range of computer applications and provide opportunities to practice skills such as keyboarding, word processing, filling in forms online, and data entry. Students use the computer to create many of the documents they need to carry out the work of their teams – for example, sign-up sheets, memos, invoices, notices, posters, brochures, coupons, surveys, and the newsletter layout. They use the internet to research newsletter stories, gather information for events planning or to look for recipes and nutrition information. Students use email, online discussion boards, and presentation software and learn to share files through the PTP network. Free point-of-sale software available on the internet has made it possible for students working at the snack shop to learn how to use a computerized cash register and inventory system. Ordering through an online grocery store allows students to practice using a database. Students also make use of 'free-ware' to create surveys, photo albums and web logs (blogs) using online programs. The Newsletter Team, for instance, uses a blog as a way to "publish" stories between print issues and as a place to collect stories until there is enough material to put out a new issue. Events Team students use a blog to document their activities, promote special events (e.g., by posting copies of their posters) and share photos. Students have opportunities to use office equipment such as faxes, phones and photocopiers. They learn to take and download pictures using a digital camera and to use a tape recorder to aid note taking (e.g., as part of conducting newsletter interviews). Students involved in food prep use appliances such as crock-pots and rice cookers and a digital scale to weigh food servings. Students not only learn how to use these pieces of equipment, they practice skills such as troubleshooting when problems occur, reading instructions (e.g., in appliance manuals), and learning how to properly handle and maintain equipment.

The PTP teamwork program is successful from the perspective of instructors and students and both instructors and students see many benefits in the Teamwork approach. There are some differences in terms of what instructors and students chose to focus on in describing the features and benefits of the program.

Instructors see that Teamwork exposes students to the kinds of literate and numerate, problem-solving and interpersonal practices that they are likely to encounter in a workplace. Instructors tend to focus on the exposure to workplace culture and the opportunity Teamwork provides for students to learn how to learn (by observing others, asking questions, acting on responses, judging the efficacy of actions, etc.), to practice task completion, master routines and to interact with each other in a professional manner.

The Teamwork program affords students multiple opportunities to acquire, and to practice and apply skills learned in the classroom. Work in the teams provides critical content for classroom instruction. Instructors necessarily focus on the acquisition and development of a range of skills that will enable students to meet their employment goals within the general context of definable and measurable skills. (For example, the skill levels and descriptions in the matrix of Learning Outcomes in use in adult literacy programming in Ontario,[33] and the "soft skills" as described in the Essential Skills framework.)

From the point of view of instructors, Teamwork tasks and activities are important as the means to provide opportunities for students to work on skills and to develop and enhance independence and self-direction.

Students tended to focus on the practical skills they gained related to "real" jobs, for example, use of the cash register. Each group generally attributed real benefits to this type of programming. Students see that the program offers them the opportunity to acquire valuable practical skills and to develop literacy and numeracy skills that will be helpful in employment and to use those skills in the way they are used on the job.

HOW DOES TEAMWORK PROVIDE A MEANINGFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS?

The Teamwork program provides a way for students to gain meaningful experience in a supported setting. The Teamwork approach is supported by research examining the effectiveness of contextualized learning, for example Giddens and Stasz conclude that, "at work, skills become multidimensional" and they support the development of

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[33]   Ontario Literacy Coalition (2001) The Level Descriptions Manual .http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/levels/cover.htm

Workforce Literacy Programming

"contextualized learning classrooms" in which "authentic tasks and apprenticeship methods" are utilized in order to help students begin to appreciate the complexieties of the workplace and the ways in which knowledge and skills are applied in practice.[34]

Teamwork experience places the individual in a continuum of learning that is part of a job. It makes it possible for students to see or imagine themselves in a particular job.

Pinsent-Johnson notes that the aim of workforce literacy programming is to "integrate literacy development with learning about employment"[35] and that it is critially important to support the "development of cultural and personal knowledge"[36]. The majority of students at PTP have worked in highly contingent forms of employment (e.g., temporary work through employment agencies) and often have a limited knowledge of workplace norms and culture.

Teamwork creates a safe environment for students to try and re-try tasks and activities. The opportunity to practice skills allows students to build on what they know and to deepen learning. The linkages between literacy and numeracy tasks in the classroom and the Teamwork activities enable students to see the relevance of the classroom tasks and to practice their skills in a real work situation.

Teamwork provides an opportunity for students to display competencies they already have and to value these skills as evidence that they have learned and can learn. The Teamwork approach is dynamic, moving away from limitations of textbook learning in which students are restricted to learning 'about' employment related activities, tasks and skills and do not have the opportunity to experience, apply and practice skills. Victoria Purcell-Gates[37] has discussed classroom activities using generative themes from the lives of adult learners. She claims that this use of "life-context-specific materials and activities [which] is supported by research that documents the powerful role of context in learning can be misunderstood as the use of mass produced materials (such as commercially produced textbooks with workplace themed exercises) and 'mass-prescribed' activities (such as teaching students how to fill out a cheque book when they don't have and don't plan to open a chequing account). This is an inappropriate understanding of 'life contextualized' learning."

The Teamwork program sets out an approach to workforce literacy that doesn't only fulfill the needs of employers. The Teamwork approach gives students an opportunity to examine and learn about work from several aspects. The program provides opportunities for students

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34   Giddens, Beth and Stasz, Cathy. (1999). *Context Matters: Teaching and Learning Skills for Work*. Berkeley, California: National Center for Research in Vocational Education.

35   Pinsent Johnson p. 41

36   Ibid. p. 175

37   Purcell-Gates et al p.7

to critically reflect on work (e.g., workplace expectations; employer, employee, co-worker relationships; workplace values; workers' rights and workplace safety). Teams model what a good work experience should be. Teamwork activities (the provision of real life job tasks involving schedules, time management and the need for ongoing planning and problem solving, for example) encourage and support independence and self-management. Activities help students to understand the importance of recognizing a wide range of workplace values, such as efficiency, productivity and accountability – but also co-operation, trust, respect, and inclusion.

The Teamwork program allows for involvement in the production of materials and the use of equipment that are associated with real or important jobs (e.g. food preparation in a commercial setting; word-processing, photocopying, using e-mail). Students' experiences working in the teams provide them with real reference points when they work on occupational research in the LBS classroom and enable students to make a more realistic assessment of what is needed in terms of skills and knowledge as they plan for employment or further training.

By working on occupational research students learn about job requirements and can then compare what they have learned with the work requirements in teams to get a more accurate sense of how job requirements translate into real work tasks and activities.

HOW DOES TEAMWORK HELP INSTRUCTORS TO EXTEND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF WORKFORCE LITERACY?

Addressing workforce literacy through authentic tasks as in the Teamwork program helps instructors better understand what students need to know and need to be able to do. Instructors extend their understanding of the needs and requirements of students with employment goals and recognise that workforce literacy is most effective when students have the opportunity to work on "real" tasks in an environment in which the focus is on learning how to work rather than learning about work.

Through their work in the Teamwork program, instructors recognise that workforce literacy activities can contribute to personal empowerment for students. Students gain self confidence in mastering practical skills and are better able to recognise their own strengths and accomplishments and set realistic goals for employment and further education and training.

Through team activities, students engage in an ongoing demonstration of skills, providing constant feedback for instructors. The Teamwork approach has helped instructors to recognise more fully that the content taught needs to be meaningful to students, connected

to their work in teams and, where possible, related to the types of employment that interest students.

The Teamwork approach has also helped instructors to see that classroom lessons are more effectively taught and learned when students are encouraged to work, for example, to write, in context. For example, one instructor has begun to communicate with students by email by requesting that they respond by email when reporting on their occupational research activities. Within the program in general instructors and students increasingly use email to communicate. She also encourages students to actively participate in the use of in-house online discussion boards to discuss and reflect on their learning in the classroom and in the teams.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research observations and the interview responses of PTP staff and students, the Teamwork program is an effective and successful approach to workforce literacy from the perspective of instructors and students involved in the program. As a result of a more systematic use of focus groups and student surveys, PTP has been able to respond more efficiently and effectively to student concerns and interests.

As noted above, Teamwork activities have evolved as staff at PTP have developed a deeper understanding of the actual needs of students in relation to their employment goals. Over time, they have sharpened their understanding of the types of tasks and activities that are most effective and sustainable in that context. The Teamwork program is not static. It is in a continuous process of refinement and improvement as instructors incorporate their experiences, observations and what they learn as they interact with students in the classroom and in the teams.

The Teamwork program has developed through experience and practice. As noted above, the initial theoretical impetus was Functional Context Education. Now, after six years of learning and refinement it is interesting to note that many of the practices that have developed in the Teamwork program are borne out in recent research (specifically, through Equipped for the Future[38] - an extensive research initiative in the United States) on the effectiveness of contextualized learning.

The process and practices that have developed in the Teamwork program, a component of the Workplace Communications program at PTP, are remarkably close to descriptions of

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[38] The Equipped for the Future Portal contains a comprehensive collection of documents related to the background, research findings and content standards as well as supporting products to guide programs and instructors. http://eff.cls.utk.edu/default.htm

what researchers have found to be effective instructional practices. For instance,

In recent years, an accumulating body of research evidence has demonstrated that the acquisition of content-related knowledge and skills alone is not sufficient for the development of expertise. To move from novice to expert levels of performance or competence, learners need to acquire both content knowledge and procedural knowledge related to when and how to apply what has been learned.

These same principles apply to workforce education, where nationwide studies have confirmed that acquiring job-related content and basic academic skills is not enough to prepare adults and youth to be effective on the job. Just as important are interpersonal, decision-making, and planning skills and the knowledge of when and how to apply these skills within the social context of the workplace. These skills require instructional approaches that focus on cooperative learning, apprenticeship models, and teamwork.[39]

In summary, the Teamwork program has successfully created a learning environment in which the educational needs and employment goals of students can be addressed in a relatively integrated model, where the more academic activities in the classroom and the employment or work-based activities in the teams are interconnected in a meaningful and mutually supporting way.

Teamwork is the vehicle for bringing together the employment and learning goals of students with the learning areas to be worked on in the LBS classroom. It provides the context in which instructors can observe the existing skills of their students, accurately identify learning needs and make adjustments and refinements to their instructional strategies.

Workforce literacy programming at PTP is a work in progress. It aims to be dynamic, flexible and meaningful. Programming therefore allows for instructor autonomy and student feedback. Its guiding principles are integration, relevance and contextualization.

From the perspective of instructional delivery, its primary components are communications, numeracy, computer and occupational research classes organized by LBS level. Another key component is Teamwork. Since students select the team in which they participate, teams are multi-level groups.

All programming components are viewed as complementary and emphasis is placed on breaking down barriers. For example, redefining the learning space by removing classroom

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[39]   Gillespie, M. (2002) EFF Research to Practice Note 3. Washington, D.C. National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) p. 2

walls is the image PTP uses to encourage a less conventional or traditional approach to literacy learning. This means that integration and cross-fertilization are important objectives. While each student has a set schedule and while there are subject areas such as math, students may use the computer (developing and practicing computer skills) to learn math. In communications classes, students may read graphs or tabulate results from a survey they have designed and conducted. What is learned in one domain is carried over or appropriated in another.

There are also opportunities for students to see themselves as members of a single community rather than simply a member, say, of a group at a particular LBS level or as a Newsletter Team member. Weekly centre meetings organized and run by students help to foster this awareness, and the skills required to conduct these meetings are explicitly taught.

Because of the way in which PTP's learning environment is structured, it is a natural and normal occurrence for a student or class to take the initiative of acting as a spokesperson, bringing forward suggestions, requests or concerns. With instructor support, a memo may be prepared or an email sent. Or, a delegation that has rehearsed what to say and how to say it may make a presentation to students and/or a program administrator. Responses are expected and are provided.

These kinds of actions are viewed by staff as informal, holistic demonstrations, ones that have a real, immediate and clear purpose, require the use and integration of skills practised and learned, and have an identifiable outcome that makes it possible to assess all the actions that led to it.

While the Teamwork program is successful, it is not without challenges both for instructors and students.

For instance, although instructors generally understand that it is not the task that is important but the way in which the task sets up opportunities for students to acquire, practice and apply particular skills, it can sometimes be difficult for instructors to relinquish control and responsibility for task completion and to stand back and allow students to plan, to recognize and solve problems, to meet deadlines and to complete tasks on time.

The continuous intake model presents another challenge. This model has advantages, particularly in that it encourages peer learning, newly arrived students learn from more experienced team members. However, since the composition of teams can change on a week-to-week basis, this often means that more ongoing teaching and coaching are required.

Instructors are also challenged to continuously evaluate how they connect instructional activities in the classroom to team activities, and how to incorporate learning in teams into the tasks in the classroom.

Students at PTP are sometimes unclear about connections between their work in the classroom and the work to which they are assigned in the Teamwork program. They sometimes lack clarity of purpose as they move from the classroom to Teamwork activities and back again.

Connections between the components of the Teamwork program are not always apparent to students. As Susan Gaer notes in her study of project based learning "The students must see the value in a project. The purpose of the project must be shared by the students."[40]

Issues related to understanding the program, knowing how to connect both components, training staff, providing useful and supportive professional development are very important to instructors. Connections between the literacy and basic skills classes and the Teamwork activities need to be made more transparent and obvious to students.

Although confronted by many challenges, the Teamwork initiative both learns from and helps to support the creation of a dynamic learning environment. It is a separate initiative that is nonetheless an integral programming component. Teams must communicate within themselves, with other teams, program staff and the school community. How they function, decisions they make, what they do or don't do contribute to the quality of life and the learning experience of all PTP members, staff and students alike.

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[40] Gaer, Susan. (1998) Less Teaching and More Learning: Turning from traditional methods to project-based instruction, the author found that her students learned more. London, England: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

PARTICIPANT PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

The majority of programs that responded to the online survey only incorporate hands-on activities on an occasional basis. Some have developed more extensive activities. The responses of the environmental scan revealed that programs incorporate hands-on learning in a variety of ways. Some incorporate activities such as sewing, quilting, cooking, gardening and small carpentry projects into specific program contexts such as life skills, numeracy, and family or health literacy classes. Involving students in tasks and activities related to program operation and decision-making is another way that programs provide authentic learning opportunities for students. At a number of programs, for example, students are involved in running students' councils, organizing fundraising events, preparing school newsletters and bulletin boards, and taking part in outreach activities. Several programs also identified special projects, including planting a community garden and producing and selling calendars as a program fundraiser, as having provided opportunities for students to learn and practice skills in authentic ways.

An environmental scan surveying all LBS agencies in Ontario led to the identification of several workforce literacy initiatives. The purpose of the scan was to determine the extent to which programs have incorporated the kinds of authentic learning opportunities focused on in this report and their reasons for doing so. Ultimately six programs were selected and agreed to participate in a more in-depth review of their workforce literacy programming.

These programs were selected because, although many of the responding programs reported that they incorporate hands-on activities only on an occasional basis, these six have developed programming that offers students hands-on learning as a regular part of their literacy program, and on an ongoing basis. Information for the program profiles was gathered primarily through telephone interviews and email correspondence.

The researcher also visited two programs, Quinte Adult Day School in Belleville and Prince Edward Learning Centre in Picton, where she had the opportunity to meet and interview a small number of students and staff.

The programs described share a similar understanding of the principle that "learning by doing" can offer a way into learning for those students for whom other, more academic approaches have not worked. Creating the conditions for students to work together to accomplish a goal is seen as a way to develop a range of literacy, numeracy and employability skills and to provide students with opportunities to demonstrate strengths across several areas.

Although these programs are similar in terms of purpose and intent, there are important differences in focus, scale and approach. Some of these initiatives provide employability

skills development opportunities, focused on sector specific skills, others focus more on program and community based authentic tasks, and another provides more job specific skills following an embedded skills model[41]. Another significant difference lies in the degree to which agencies have incorporated hands-on activities within their own program context or have extended their activities beyond their program boundaries. Some have established small-scale activities, using existing staff and resources while others have looked to the wider community to develop projects, and one program has set up work placements for students.

Embedded Learning Approach[42]

The concept and practices of Embedded Learning have been widely used in the U.K. within the context of the Skills for Life initiative. The Embedded Learning Portal[43] is a comprehensive source of information, research and materials for use by educators who are engaged in Embedded Learning. The site describes the Embedded Learning approach as follows:

> " " "Embedded teaching and learning combines the development of literacy, language and numeracy with vocational and other skills. The skills acquired provide learners with the confidence, competence and motivation necessary for them to progress, gain qualifications and to succeed in life and at work."

Skilled Trades Entry Preparation Program (STEPP), Quinte Adult Day School, Belleville

The Quinte Adult Day School (QADS) in Belleville has implemented a hands-on initiative called STEPP – Skilled Trades Exploration and Preparation Program – in which participants develop literacy, numeracy and employment skills in the context of working on carpentry and renovation projects. This initiative started with small woodworking projects (e.g., pattern-based scroll saw projects) incorporated into regular classroom programming. Instructors used the projects as a way to help students develop planning and group work skills, to teach the literacy and numeracy skills embedded[44] in the projects (e.g., reading directions; measurement math), and to motivate students' interest in learning.

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[41] Gidley, Nancy and Eldred, Jan. op.cit

[42] Activities are not described as Embedded Learning by the program, but share characteristics with more formal Embedded Learning models in the U. K. For example, Gidley, Nancy and Eldred, Jan. op. cit.

[43] http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/embeddedlearning/

[44] Gidley, Nancy and Eldred, Jan. op. cit.

Success using this approach led the agency to make hands-on learning a larger part of the program. An instructor with carpentry and renovation skills was hired two days a week and a wood shop was set up in part of the agency's storefront space, enabling the program to set up larger-scale projects. These included building a children's playhouse for a community organization that serves families dealing with domestic violence, renovation work on the agency's own space and constructing a float for a local parade. Since the float was designed as a replica of a local historical building, students also researched the building's history as part of this project.

The current year's project is a renovation of the agency's space. The program has received funding from the Skills Link program of Service Canada[45] to run STEPP as a 9-month youth initiative. For their participation in the project, students are paid the youth minimum wage and will earn two high school credits. They spend four days a week taking part in building and renovation work and the fifth day in the LBS classroom upgrading their literacy, numeracy and employability skills. Before being allowed to go on the work site, they must take and pass a series of safe work training programs – Falls Prevention, WHMIS, and WSIB's Young Worker Awareness Safety Program.

In addition to obtaining additional funding for STEPP initiatives, QADS has arranged for a number of local agencies to deliver several of the safety training components and job-readiness workshops. The participants have also completed their Standard First Aid/CPR training with St. John's Ambulance and written the exam to obtain their G2 drivers' licenses (a necessary employment skill in a rural community). A community volunteer helped the youth build and personalize their own large wooden toolboxes and shop using weekly flyers during the project to stock them with decent quality tools.

Instructors at the STEPP program cite a major benefit of the program as serving to reconnect students with education and training opportunities. The program has had success retaining 'at risk' youth for whom other forms of programming have not been successful. A number of these students have been able to acquire high school credits based on their participation in STEPP. STEPP also helps to fill a work experience gap for many participants who use the experience on a resume or obtain a work reference. Instructors also note that the program has encouraged students to become more involved in their own community, deepening their sense of civic engagement.

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[45]   Skills Link funds community organizations that assist youth facing barriers to employment.
        http://www.youth.gc.ca/yoaux.jsp?&lang=en&flash=1&ta=1&auxpageid=713

Sector Specific Authentic Tasks Approach

The sector specific approach refers to a decision to focus workforce literacy programming on a single occupational category.

Employment Preparation and Upgrading Program, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

The Employment Preparation and Upgrading Program of the Ottawa District School Board runs three sector-specific employment preparation classes geared towards preparing students for training and jobs in the childcare, personal support work, and retail/customer service sectors. The agency, which originally ran a primarily academic program, has made the transition towards integrating literacy with employment preparation over a number of years[46]. A key feature of the program is the inclusion of a work placement component.[47] Students in the retail and child care classes get on-the-job experience through placements with employers such as The Bay, Zellers, and Winners and at child care centres operated by the school board. Students in the PSW class visit training programs to learn more about entry requirements and course demands in these programs.

The classes are run twice a year for five-month terms. Participants go to their work placement one day a week and attend classes the remainder of the week. Classroom instructors visit students at their job sites each week, monitoring how the placements are going. This enables instructors to identify the kinds of literacy and numeracy demands students encounter on the job as well as other issues they need support with (e.g., understanding and meeting workplace expectations, dealing with problems that arise). Classroom instruction focuses on workforce literacy and numeracy development and job readiness skills and uses sector-specific materials. Students prepare for relevant certification in CPR, First Aid, or Food Handling and also receive support with the preparation of resumes and practice interview skills.

The program also operates an on-site coffee shop that serves staff and participants from the program and other agencies in the building. Students in the retail class learn and practice cash register and money-handling skills by working as cashiers in the shop. Food prep and counter service are carried out by students in *Steps to Community* – a literacy, employment preparation and life skills program set up specifically for students with developmental disabilities. Their tasks include preparing baked goods, serving customers, and maintaining supplies. Students in this group also have opportunities to engage in hands-on learning by

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[46]   Pinsent-Johnson, C. Op. cit.

[47]   One obstacle to setting up the work placements was finding a way to pay for workers' compensation insurance. The solution has been to arrange for the school board to extend its coverage to the program.

working in the program's resource room where they carry out photocopying and bookbinding tasks.

The sector-specific approach has been successful in ensuring that students are able to recognize the connection between what they are learning in the classroom and what they are doing at work. Another strength of this approach is that participants receive classroom instruction and job-site support from the same instructor. This allows instructors to provide a form of job coaching for students. Often this centers on exploring 'socio-cultural' dimensions of the work environment. For instance, instructors find that students often want to talk about work culture issues they encounter at their job placements. They also find that students need opportunities to examine how work practices relate to wider organizational goals or are tied to specific knowledge frameworks (e.g., the ways in which theories of child development shape the practice of child care in early childhood education). By knowing the work environments students are in, instructors are able to provide ways for students to develop understanding in these areas.

'From Me to You' Used Clothing Store – New Leaf Literacy, Sudbury

New Leaf is an LBS program for at-risk youth and adults offered through the Sudbury Vocational Resource Centre. In addition to providing one-on-one tutoring and classroom-based literacy and computer instruction, New Leaf operates the From Me to You Outlet, a used-clothing store run by and for students in the program.

Various positions including manager, cashiers, and inventory and payroll clerks have been set up in connection with the operation of the store. *From Me to You* pays its workers using its own currency – 'New Leaf dollars.' Participants earn wages in New Leaf currency for the hours they put in at the store. In turn, this 'money' can be redeemed to purchase items, both used and new, at the store. Calculating payroll, depositing and withdrawing money from an account (created using a spreadsheet), pricing goods, providing customer service, and operating the cash register are all tasks learned and carried out in this context.

New Leaf set up the clothing store initiative in order to teach literacy skills geared to employment in the retail sector in which there are entry-level job openings locally. In addition to developing workplace literacy and numeracy skills, including money handling, consumer math, measurement, and reading signs and labels, participants in the clothing store gain self-confidence and practice team building skills.

Rejeanne Faucher, executive director at New Leaf, says that many of the learners at the program "have been unsuccessful in the traditional classroom approach. Authentic

materials allow students to relate literacy skills to areas that are important to them or to their immediate needs. Also, hands-on repetitive activities are easier to remember on a long-term basis." Seeing others in the program succeed at finding employment or accomplishing a personal goal, she adds, motivates participants' learning. Working in the store gives students an opportunity to build self-confidence and to practice working in teams.

Program-Based Authentic Tasks Approach

A program-based authentic tasks approach refers to programming that provides students with the opportunity to engage in tasks that are "real," that is to say, tasks that students are likely to encounter in workplaces. In this approach the tasks are assigned and carried out in the program.

Learner Operated Canteen – Alternative Education Centre, Kapuskasing

Students at the Alternative Education Centre in Kapuskasing participate in running a canteen, selling beverages, snacks and lunch foods to staff and program participants at the centre. Initially set up to provide a convenient service for program participants and staff, instructors realized that the canteen offered opportunities for learners to apply the literacy and numeracy skills that they were working on in the program to practical tasks such as purchasing and maintaining supplies and providing customer service.

Operating out of a room in the centre's basement, this initiative provides a good example of how a relatively small program (two classes with a total of 20 – 25 learners) has created a setting within which students can practice skills in real ways. The canteen is equipped with a fridge, freezer, stove, coffee machine and microwave ovens. Money raised from sales at the canteen was used to buy paint, tables and chairs to decorate and furnish the space and stock is purchased on an on-going basis from a local wholesaler. Profits from the canteen are used regularly to fund special events, such as holiday parties at the centre. Students volunteer to run the canteen and are shown how to set up and run the shop and are given one-on-one support from instructors.

Sharon Brisson, LBS instructor and program co-ordinator at the centre, reports that students at both higher and lower LBS levels benefit from working in the canteen. Often, she says, the opportunity to engage in practical learning serves to motivate students struggling with paper and pen based learning. The canteen experience has also helped participants with employment goals. For instance, one student working at LBS level 2 who struggled with

basic addition and subtraction, worked at the canteen for nearly a year, getting one-on-one support as needed, before getting a job in a restaurant where she now works as a cashier. Another student was able to apply the hours worked at the canteen towards a high school credit.

Destination Workforce – Holy Angel Learning Centre, Sault Ste. Marie

Destination Workforce is a program for students with employment goals at The Holy Angel Learning Centre, a school board based LBS program in Sault Ste. Marie. This is a full-time program with one instructor who delivers literacy and numeracy instruction and supervises hands-on activities.

The program operates a student-run meal program. The decision to start a meal program grew out of the recognition that many students were coming to school hungry, consequently finding it hard to concentrate on learning. All students in the Destination Workforce program participate. Students referred to the program through Ontario Works[48] are required to take part in running the lunch program. A group of eight students prepares and serves a lunch daily for approximately forty to fifty students from the LBS program and other programs in the building including an Ontario Youth Apprenticeship program, a high school credit program and a daycare centre. There is no charge for the lunch, although small donations in the range of twenty-five cents to a dollar are collected. The eight students responsible for the lunch collectively plan the menu each week and prep, serve and clean up each day. Responsibility for specific tasks – acting as group leader, doing the grocery shopping and keeping track of the accounts – rotates among the members of the group. Students who prefer not to cook take on other tasks such as helping with the set-up and clean up, decorating for special events, or doing the bookkeeping. The program has also provided students with support to attend a range of employment certification programs such as First Aid, Smart Serve[49,] CPR and has also provided workshops on employability skills.

Community-Based Authentic Tasks

A community-based authentic tasks approach refers to programming that provides students with the opportunity to engage in tasks that are "real," that is to say, tasks that students are likely to encounter in workplaces. In this approach tasks are carried out in or provide a service to the community.

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[48] An Ontario government social assistance run program – Ontario Works provides income and employment assistance to people who are in temporary financial need.

[49] See p. 6, above.

Workforce Literacy Programming

Trails to Literacy

Trails to Literacy is a concept that was developed by North Frontenac in Sharbot Lake (formerly Northern Connections Adult Learning Centre) and later adopted by other LBS agencies around the province. In 2000 the section of the Trans-Canada Trail running through the local area was being developed. North Frontenac saw this as an opportunity to use a community project as a context for students to apply and practice the skills they were learning in the program. They also saw it as a way to promote literacy programming within their local community. With start-up funds from the National Literacy Secretariat (an agency of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada)[50] , the agency initiated a project in which students produced "interpretive signs describing local flora and fauna, geographic information and historical events" for placement along the trail. These funds allowed the program to set up a wood shop on-site and purchase materials for the project. Researching and writing the text and constructing the signs provided opportunities for students to develop a wide range of LBS and employability skills. The project was a big success with students and, as hoped, served to attract new participants to the program.

Over the next two years, *Trails* projects were started by six other Ontario LBS agencies and a report manual and toolkit as well as a website were developed.[51] From the outset, Trails to Literacy was conceptualised as a way to incorporate employment preparation into literacy programming.

Trails - North Frontenac, Sharbot Lake

North Frontenac continues to run Trails activities one day each week. The program operates on a "participant lead" basis – students identify the skills they want to develop and define projects around these goals. The instructors' role in these projects is to help facilitate activities, identify learning objectives and keep projects on track. Only projects not deemed 'do-able' are vetoed by staff, particularly any that may affect a community partner if not completed. In a recent project, Trails participants built bird feeder kits for local daycare centres. In addition to building pieces for the kits, participants taught daycare staff and children to put the bird feeders together. At other times, the group has organized cooking and baking activities. The program has proved very popular with participants and 'Trails Day' is often the busiest day in the program.

In an effort to ensure that students are committed to the program and will follow through on projects, areas where, in the past, Trails has run into problems, North Frontenac has established some basic conditions for participation in the program. Before new students can

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[50]   National Literacy Secretariat is now the National Office of Literacy and Learning.
http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/learning/adult_literacy/index.shtml

[51]   http://www.frontenac.net/~literacy/

join Trails, they need to have attended the literacy program at North Frontenac for at least one month. They must also have a training plan and have done some work to identify a learning goal. Setting up conditions of participation has also helped to ensure that participants recognize the learning purpose of projects undertaken in Trails. With this in mind, proposed projects are checked out by the staff-facilitators of the program to make sure that they provide opportunities for students to apply and practice skills identified in the LBS guidelines.

Trails - Prince Edward Learning Centre, Picton

The Prince Edward Learning Centre in Picton also currently runs a Trails program. The agency has set up a woodworking shop in a small building (off-site) rented from Prince Edward County. As one of the six agencies involved in piloting Trails, PELC's first project was to design and build signs marking access points to those sections of the Trans-Canada Millennium Trail in the local area. Further projects have included helping to refurbish a local theatre and building wooden garbage/recycling containers, planters and picnic tables for the municipality.

As they begin each project, students develop a plan outlining the work that will be involved and the skills they want to learn through the project. Lori Farrington, the Trails instructor at PELC has also developed a series of activities and skills checklists designed to help students recognize and track their progress at various stages of their project. Documenting learning in this way not only helps instructor and students to reflect on and plan the learning, it also provides a way to demonstrate how the Trails program achieves LBS objectives.

Key to sustaining Trails has been obtaining funding to pay for rent, staff, equipment and materials. Partnerships with community agencies have helped fund the program. For example, PELC partnered with OW to fund participants' involvement in the theatre renovation project. Ontario Works also pays for the safety equipment needed by participants. It is also worth noting that Trails has not required an instructor with particular technical skills in carpentry. Instead, instructors have developed these skills alongside students.

A 'learning by doing' approach has carried over into other activities in the program. For example, an important activity for students and staff is the running of the student council. This group runs weekly meetings, organizes fund raising activities and special events at the school and in the community. The student council provides a forum for students in the administration of the agency. Being involved in the student council helps participants to develop advocacy, planning, organization and oral communication skills. Instructors see the activities of the council as another means to incorporate practices such as record keeping, writing notes and agendas, recording meeting minutes and using spreadsheets.

Workforce Literacy Programming

The programs described here share a similar understanding of the role that authentic learning experiences play within the LBS system. They see these activities as providing opportunities for students to use literacy and numeracy skills taught in the classroom to carry out activities that serve a practical purpose. By engaging in these activities, programs offer a way to prepare students for employment; provide a way to address more tacit aspects of learning; and promote skills transfer. Programs view these activities as constituting effective workforce literacy practices.

Program Focus

Programs see these activities as offering a way to prepare students for employment by providing opportunities to acquire employability and job specific skills and gain experience linked to training and employment. Some of these activities and settings allow students to pick up real work skills and 'know how.' Several of the initiatives described here, for instance, provide opportunities for students to use a cash register, learn how to carry out inventory, acquire food prep skills, develop carpentry and renovation skills, do data entry and use tools. By defining the learning environment as 'like a workplace,' programs create expectations associated with work: punctuality, reliability, workmanship, safety on the job and commitment to seeing a task or project through. Some students are able to work towards or acquire employment-related certification such as a Food Handler, Smart Serve, WHMIS, CPR, or First Aid certificate. The experience gained makes it possible to acquire work references and to build a resume.

Employment Preparation

Learning in these environments also helps students acquire a better understanding of specific kinds of work environments and work practices. Asking questions and engaging in conversations about work and training allow for an understanding of work culture, workplace expectations and responsibilities. The experience and understanding gained helps bridge students to further training and employment opportunities. Students develop the confidence to enter a training program or apply for a job where training is provided.

The types of activities provided in the programs can help students to see more clearly, for example, why knowing how to measure accurately matters. In this way the need to learn certain mathematical operations becomes more obvious. Activities may also provide opportunities for students to demonstrate – or develop – competence in areas that are not usually focused on in the classroom: the ability to use equipment and tools, to plan and organize tasks.

Benefits to Literacy Programs

An additional benefit derived from these initiatives is as a means to market LBS programming more broadly. Several programs report that they have been able to attract participants who they think would not otherwise come to a 'literacy' program. One measure of STEPP's success, for instance, has been its ability to attract and retain at-risk youth. For these students, the fact that the program looks less like 'schooling' and more like job training is part of its appeal. Programs also report that the inclusion of activities linked to employment and training helps to shift the widely held perception that literacy programming is only about learning to read and write. North Frontenac, for example, attributes its success in getting social services departments to see the relevance of literacy programming as a route to employment as a key outcome of the Trails to Literacy initiative.

Benefits to the Community

Another benefit is the forging of stronger linkages between program and community. These initiatives are often responses to specific program and community needs. Activities such as running a meal program, coffee shop or second-hand clothing exchange provide services needed and used by program participants. In smaller communities, the initiatives serve as a way for programs to engage in community development. Examples here include helping to create and maintain nature trails, building picnic tables for public areas, renovating a local theatre, constructing bird feeder kits for a local daycare and building a float for a community parade. Aside from the obvious benefits to the community, students gain from this involvement in a number of ways. Programs point out that when students' skills and contributions are recognized within their communities, it changes the way they feel about themselves and their participation in literacy programming. Another benefit is a higher level of civic engagement on the part of students. Programs also report that activities carried out within the community serve to increase the visibility of LBS programming and to make its benefits known to a wider audience.

Adequate Program Funding

A primary challenge faced by programs is lack of adequate funding. Some of the programs described here have had to seek funding from sources outside LBS in order to cover the cost of equipment, space, materials or insurance (e.g., WSIB insurance). Implementing these kinds of initiatives takes extra time and effort and sometimes requires higher instructor-student ratios. Recruiting instructors who have technical skills and the ability to teach literacy is also a significant challenge.

Within the context of the LBS system, setting up off-site learning opportunities presents a challenge in that programs must be able to demonstrate that time spent by students who are

learning off-site, for example in job placements, can legitimately be counted as instructional hours within the literacy program. Programs have developed a variety of ways of demonstrating how activities are linked to LBS learning outcomes – for example, developing and using skills checklists and goal setting activities to help students identify the skills they are learning by participating in hands-on activities; documenting learning outcomes on training plans.

These initiatives challenge us to build on, question and extend our understanding of what constitutes effective literacy practices.

Best Practices

Best practices in adult literacy are usually defined as those programming and instructional practices, activities and approaches that are demonstrably effective in relation to stated goals. In this case the goal is to provide effective workforce literacy programming. The list of best practices below is based on the day-to-day experiences of instructors and students in the PTP Teamwork program and the instructors and students in the programs reviewed. These practices are anchored in the daily experience of delivering workforce literacy in adult literacy programs. In the interests of clarity the list is divided into three broad areas. General, referring to practices at the programming level. Instructor Support, referring to practices that support instructors as they plan and deliver programming, and Student Support, referring to practices that support students in an integrated workforce literacy program to maximize learning and to achieve their goals.

General

Work at creating partnerships with other community agencies in your region.

Connect to local employers, employment training organizations, high schools and colleges.

Become familiar with what employer groups say about employability skills, e.g., Conference Board of Canada Employability Skills 2000+.

Become familiar with the HRSDC Essential Skills Framework.

Use all available resources, e.g., The Imagine Canada Promising practices catalogue[52] for non-profit organizations.

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[52] National Literacy Secretariat is now the National Office of Literacy and Learning. http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/learning/adult_literacy/index.shtml

Explore a range of potential funding options, e.g., Service Canada.[53]

Build in sufficient time for planning the program.

Consider what types of activities and authentic tasks "fit," i.e., consider time, resources and what can be accomplished that addresses the greatest number of foundational skills.

Set up clear objectives regarding the intended learning outcomes of the workforce literacy programming.

Encourage and support instructors to plan carefully, to define learning objectives, and to create lesson plans.

Develop demonstrations activities around team tasks.
Create basic criteria for participation and expectations regarding attendance, participation and time keeping.

Create clear guidelines for instructors and students so that processes are transparent and participants have clarity of purpose.

Use training plans to guide students in planning learning, noting achievement and determining next steps.

Seeing others succeed helps students to see their path. Celebrate achievement and celebrate success.

Invite graduates who have moved on to employment or further training to return to share their experiences with students.

Encourage and support flexibility in programming, for instructors and for students.

Instructor Support

Encourage and support work site visits so that instructors have opportunities to become familiar with the types of work that students are most likely to encounter.

Provide appropriate professional development. For example:
- workforce literacy delivery
- learning disabilities
- working with individuals living with disabilities
- working with multilevel groups

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[53] http://www.frontenac.net/~literacy/

Allow time for instructors to gain basic familiarity with the authentic tasks. For example:
- learning computer applications
- learning to do inventory
- practicing a cooking skill
- setting up bookkeeping records

Make time for, and formalize opportunities for instructors to meet and discuss information about specific student needs and activities to ensure that critical information is recorded and exchanged.

Establish time frames, clear objectives and the steps in a process to help ensure that projects are brought to completion and that students experience success.
Structure sessions and projects so that there are regular points in the process to 'check-in' (recap and determine next steps) so that the problems are recognised early and participants remain aware of wider objectives.

Support instructors to become very familiar with frameworks such as the HRSDC Essential Skills Framework and to connect these to the instructional planning and strategies that they undertake.

Support peer learning and knowledge exchange between instructors in the program and with instructors from other similar programs.

Student Support

Ensure that students understand the purpose of activities, understand the learning objectives and the expectations for participation.

Engage students in planning and decision-making.

Develop a manual for students that clearly shows what 'we do, what is expected' and the skills to be worked on. Include descriptions of program processes, e.g., moving from team to team, raising issues, and making suggestions for improvements.

Create routines to help students understand what they are expected to do.

Break projects down into smaller steps to help students plan and manage time.

Consider paying honoraria or institute some other incentive program to encourage and motivate participants.

Develop a consistent process for supplying students with references for employment.

Arrange work site and job fair visits for students.

Arrange for workers in occupations that interest students to visit the program and talk abut their jobs.

Mark achievement and celebrate success.

CONCLUSION – WHAT WE LEARNED

We began this report with three questions:

How are literacy programs in Ontario incorporating or integrating workforce literacy (understood as all of the activities that programs undertake to support students who want to move on to employment) into their programming?

What can be learned from the experiences of adult literacy programs that have integrated hands-on or authentic workplace tasks into their programming?

What effective or best practices in workforce literacy can be drawn from the experiences of these programs?

Over the course of the project, and as documented in this report we learned much about how programs, large and small, in rural and in urban areas have begun to incorporate and integrate workforce literacy into their programming.

Each of the programs has put its own stamp on the workforce literacy programming offered. These programs have differing approaches, and each has a particular emphasis in their workforce literacy programming. Although the scale and scope of the programs are varied they all share the same basic objective, to support students to achieve their employment goals and to provide opportunities for students to engage in authentic tasks that will increase their chances of success in the workplace.

These programs also share an important set of values and beliefs. As in all aspects of adult literacy, workforce literacy programming begins with the student, and with committed instructors who bring their energy, dedication and creativity to bear in creating and delivering literacy programming to help students to maximize learning, come to see their strengths and abilities and develop skills that will help them to meet their goals.

At PTP the Teamwork program is valued by instructors and students, it has succeeded in creating and sustaining functioning teams that provide an array of opportunities for students to learn, practice and apply employment skills.

An ancillary but important strength of the PTP approach is that the Teamwork activities create a sense of community and belonging; activities are focused on the program, and in a sense are focused inside the program. A particularly useful example is the Thursday Lunch prepared by the Food Team and shared by staff and students, eating together. This creation of community is an impressive accomplishment in a large and diverse urban centre like Toronto.

Workforce Literacy Programming

In the Ottawa-Carleton program a particular strength is the focus on supporting students to understand workplace culture. Based on the specific-sector approach, programming is more focused, making it possible to support job-placement as well as on-the-job and in-program job coaching.

In Sudbury the emphasis is on providing a service to the community. In Kapuskasing and Sault Ste. Marie the program literally feeds staff and students in the school. In Belleville, Sharbot Lake and Picton, the programs have, through the workforce literacy programming, reached out into the local community, raised the profile of the literacy program, and connected or re-connected students to their local community.

As we noted in the introduction, several factors combined to support the necessity for adult literacy programs to implement workforce literacy programming and to find ways to support students with employment goals. Each of the programs reviewed in this report has, in its own way, and based on its understanding of student goals, local labour market realities and available resources within the program and within the local communities, created programming to meet the unique needs of students.

The best practices articulated in this report are grounded in these values and beliefs of creative and committed literacy instructors and students. They represent the practices, ideas and hopes of instructors and students. They are the result of much work, thought and a commitment to making sure that workforce literacy programming is effective, meets and respects the needs of students, and will lead to accomplishment and success.

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APPENDIX A

PTP - Adult Learning and Employment Programs
(Formerly Preparatory Training Programs of Toronto)

For more information visit the PTP web site at http://www.ptp.ca/index.htm

LBS: Workplace Communications Program

A full-time program in workforce literacy for both aspiring and experienced workers with grade 12 or less whose usual goals are training or job search, funded by Employment Ontario.

Working in a learner friendly environment, students refresh the practical reading, writing, numeracy and computer skills needed to find and keep a job. Participants staff the PTP snack shop—serving customers, ordering supplies, tracking inventory. They plan and prepare simple nutritious meals. They produce a newsletter and organize special events. Learning together "on the job," they build confidence while exploring job interests and requirements, assessing their skills and enhancing their employability.

Initial and ongoing assessments using PTP's Communications and Math Employment Readiness Assessment (CAMERA) help students track progress in the areas of document use, reading text, numeracy and writing. Development of an individual training plan helps students map their next steps.

Job Solutions

A job search assistance program funded in part by the Government of Canada. The goal is to provide modified job search activities to meet the needs of clients with literacy and language barriers by
- Developing an individualized action plan
- Working with participants primarily one-on-one or in small group workshops
- Generating employment documents including resumes, reference lists, fax cover sheets, and thank you letters
- Supporting job search activities in the centre
- Searching and posting job leads
- Linking job-seekers with potential employers
- Providing participants with the use of computers, phone, and fax
- Offering the support of job developers
- Delivering services off-site at employment resource centres

Workwrite Program for Injured Workers

Designed to meet the needs of WSIB (Workplace Safety and Insurance Board) clients, the program incorporates workplace communications with ESL and upgrading. Customized programming is also available.

Workwrite Job Search Training Program for Injured Workers...

A 4-week job search program for workwrite students who have participated in job search preparation; with a solid understanding in place well before commencing job search, clients can get to the task of finding work much more quickly and successfully.

Academic Upgrading

In partnership with Seneca College and the Labour Education Centre, PTP delivers academic upgrading programs for adults who are unemployed or underemployed. The focus is on helping participants prepare for college, pre-apprenticeship training, apprenticeship or better employment opportunities.

Take Charge for Life and Work: PTP's Pre-Employment Development Program

Take Charge for Life and Work is a new program offered at PTP with funding support from Toronto Social Services. This is a 12-week program that provides pre-employment development to individuals who experience multiple barriers to employment but are motivated to make a positive change in their lives.

Employment Placement Program

The Employment Placement Program is offered in conjunction with Toronto Social Services (TSS) to assist individuals on Ontario Works to find work.

APPENDIX B

Participant Programs

Sharon Brisson
Alternative Education Centre – Kapuskasing
73 Queen Street
Kapuskasing, ON P5N 1H4

Anita Ruiz-Gomez
Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board – Holy Angels Learning Centre
102 Wellington Street East
Sault Ste.Marie, ON P6A 2L2

Joyce Bigelow
Northern Connections Adult Learning Centres (Sharbot Lake)
24719 Highway 7
P.O. Box 413
Sharbot Lake, ON K0H 2P0

Christine Pinsent-Johnson
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board – Continuing Education
440 Albert Street – Room 121-E
Ottawa, ON K1R 5B4
Web site: www.ocdsb.edu.on.ca

Linda Conley
Prince Edward Learning Centre (PELC)
206 Main Street (Lower Level of Armoury)
P.O. Box 3223
Picton, ON K0K 2T0

Marsha Roadhouse
Quinte Adult Day School (Belleville)
32 Bridge Street East
P.O. Box 22047
Bellville, ON K8N 5V7

Rejeanne Faucher
Sudbury Vocational Resource Centre – New Leaf Literacy Program
124 Cedar Street, 4th Floor
Sudbury, ON P3E 1B4

APPENDIX C

ONLINE SURVEY

From Authentic Materials to Authentic Tasks: Research Survey

The aim of this survey is to find out about LBS programs in Ontario engaging learners in hands-on, embedded or experience-based forms of learning.

I hope to include this information in the report I am writing for the MTCU funded research-in-practice project I am carrying out. While the main purpose of the project has been to document PTP's own experience using a contextualised approach to learning – through an initiative we call 'Teamwork' – I would like to capture the range of related activities going on throughout the province.

Please answer those questions that apply. At the end of the survey, you can find out how the report will be distributed.

1. Program name and location:
2. Your name and contact information (phone/email):
3. Please indicate those features that describe your program.

   ❏ One-on-one tutoring program.   ❏ Employment preparation program.
   ❏ Classroom based program.   ❏ OBS program.
   ❏ Academic upgrading (e.g. GED preparation).

4. Please add any other information about your program you would like to include.

5. Does your program include any hands-on learning activities for students? Please describe. For example, a student-operated business (e.g. snack shop); student-run projects and activities (e.g. newsletter, students' council); embedded learning activities (e.g. LBS skills learned in the context of learning another skill such as carpentry, sewing).

6. Why have you included the activities described above (if any) in your program? (e.g. What skills are learned? How else do learners benefit? How do these activities fit within the overall objectives of your program? Do these activities provide something that a traditional classroom approach to learning does not?)

7. How have you included the activities described above (if any) into your program? For example, please say whether you run these activities as a regular or only occasional part of the program. If regular, how are the activities organized?

8. Please add any questions or comments you have about the approach being investigated here.