

READING BENCHMARKS SUPPORT RESOURCES CONSULTATION

May 2011

Completed by

Capacity Consulting Inc.

Pamila Crosby, MA, President

“Addressing the challenges of adult literacy and education [outlined in this report] is key to ensuring that this nation has the educated and prepared workforce necessary to compete and succeed in the 21st century global economy. Our adult education and literacy programs are relics of another era; reform and investment are necessary to give every working age adult the opportunity to access high quality, middle class jobs in America.”

**Thomas J. Donohue, President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Honorary Commissioner**

“Basic literacy skills matter more than ever—to our economy, our international competitiveness, and the well-being of our citizens. This is especially true in the workplace. The jobs of the 21st century will require more skilled and trained workers who can listen, communicate, and solve problems. ”

**David C. Harvey, President/CEO
ProLiteracy Worldwide**

“This blue ribbon panel of industry, government, and education experts has given this country [USA] a wakeup call about our most critical economic crisis since the Depression. Congress, business and industry, and the public in general need to support and work with the adult basic education and literacy field so we can provide the quantity as well as quality of service needed to have a well-skilled workforce. Without the support called for in this report, the United States is in real danger of becoming a second rate world power.”

**Dennis Jones, President
National Center for Higher Education Management Systems**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a result of the development of the Living literacy: a literacy framework for Alberta's next generation economy, a collaborative group representing community adult literacy and learning organizations, Comprehensive Community Institutions (CCIs) and the Alberta Government was tasked with creating and implementing Alberta Reading Benchmarks. To assist implementation, they decided it would be important to understand more about what curriculum, resources and assessment tools are currently being used by either or both the community-based literacy and learning organizations and the CCIs. In addition to this information, feedback was requested on curriculum, resources and assessment that might be most useful in establishing a guiding framework for the implementation of the Reading Benchmarks in the province of Alberta.

The study was divided into two phases. In phase one we interviewed, by telephone, individuals from CCIs; regional resource people from Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Programs (VTALP), Community Adult Learning Programs (CALP) and Family Literacy Programs (FLP); and three individuals from independent community organizations. The questionnaire used in phase one can be found as Appendix A of this study. Using data gathered from phase one interviews, we designed an on-line survey that went out to 136 individual VTALP, CALP and FLP programs. The on-line survey used can be found as Appendix B of this report.

Regarding curriculum, resources and assessments currently in use by all respondents, we discovered an interesting and inconsistent range of tools in use. Many of the CCIs used tools that they had developed themselves and there was little consistency from CCI to CCI. With community-based literacy and learning organizations, we discovered that only VTALPs and a few CALPs actually delivered adult literacy programming. Again there was a plethora of tools in use but there was a bit more consistency with community-based programs. Many of them were using Pat Campbell's *Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (CARA)* and *Diagnostic Adult Literacy Assessment (DALA)*. Several were also using the *Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)*.

When we asked the respondents who delivered adult literacy programs about what would be needed to implement a comprehensive Reading Benchmark Framework, the responses were varied. A small majority indicated that a comprehensive tool kit that included all three elements (curriculum, resources and assessments) would be very useful. Many said that resource tools were plentiful and that the real need was in the development of a consistent curriculum and the tools necessary to assess learner progress.

Most of the respondents indicated a preference for a comprehensive Reading Benchmark Tool Kit. Some individuals said that certain elements of such a tool kit were more important than others and seemed to emphasize the need for standardized curricula and/or learner progress assessments.

Based on this information, the following recommendations are provided for consideration:

1. Continue development on a comprehensive tool kit containing all three elements: curriculum, resources and assessment.

2. Benchmark the resources most in use (e.g. *DALA, CARA, Oxford Picture Dictionary*) against the new guidelines contained in the *Reading Benchmarks Tool Kit*.
3. Develop standardized assessment tools to help facilitators assess learner progress.
4. Provide ongoing and regular training for facilitators to accompany the implementation of the Benchmarks Tool Kit to ensure all elements of curriculum, resources and especially assessment are effectively used.

While the study itself did not ask about the structural effectiveness of the Adult Literacy and Learning System, it seems appropriate to consider a structural review of its service-delivery continuum. Through the study, we discovered that two CCIs were reconsidering their role in the delivery of non-credit learning, and two more did not or could not participate in the study because they do not deliver non-credit adult literacy programming. Family literacy programs were unable to participate in the study because their literacy emphasis was through children in the family not adults. Community adult learning programs were not able to participate fully as only a few of their programs delivered adult literacy programs.

Therefore it seems appropriate to recommend a structural review of the current Adult Literacy and Learning System both for internal and external stakeholders. Internally, this review would assist service providers in understanding their roles and responsibilities and how to effectively bridge to other parts of the Adult Literacy and Learning System. Perhaps even more importantly, externally this clarity would provide learners with a better understanding of where to find services appropriate to their learning and literacy needs.

CONTEXT

A collaborative group consisting of representatives from community-based literacy and learning organizations, comprehensive community institutions and government departments is interested in implementing the Reading Benchmarks Framework to create easy and natural transitions for Alberta's adult learners at all stages and phases of their foundational learning journey. Participating organizations in the collaborative were the Centre for Family Literacy (CFL), the Community Learning Network (CLN) and Literacy Alberta (LA). The Comprehensive Community Institution (CCI) representatives were Bow Valley College and Northern Lakes College. The Government of Alberta was represented through the office of Alberta Education and Technology, Alberta Employment and Immigration, and Alberta Education.

As a result of the development of the Living Literacy Framework, the Collaborative was tasked with creating and implementing Alberta Reading Benchmarks. In order to assist implementation, the Collaborative decided that it was important to understand more about what curriculum, resources and assessment tools are currently being used by either or both of the community-based organizations and the CCIs. In addition to information, the Collaborative also requested feedback on curriculum, resources and assessment that might be most useful in establishing a guiding framework for the implementation of the Reading Benchmarks in the province of Alberta. It is anticipated that a consistent approach such as that suggested in the Reading Benchmarks document will further assist learning organizations and practitioners to develop programs based on best practice, and will assist government departments with the development of appropriate policy and standards.

STUDY CONDUCT

The first objective of the Reading Benchmarks Support Resources Consultation Project included the review of the types of curricula, resources and assessment tools currently being used by CCLs and community-based adult literacy programs. The second objective was to get input on what practitioners would find most helpful in the implementation of the Reading Benchmarks Framework.

To participate in this study, programs and organizations had to deliver adult literacy programs to levels one and two learners as described in the Reading Benchmarks document.

In order to gather this information, the study was completed in two phases. The first phase included one-on-one telephone interviews with program coordinators/facilitators at each of nine CCLs and with regional coordinators from the networks associated with the CFL, CLN and LA. Additionally, three Independent Community Program Facilitators were interviewed over the phone using the same questionnaire, which you will find in Appendix A.

The following table indicates participation in phase one from CCLs, VTALPs, CALPs and FLPs.

Type of Program	Contacted	Participating
Community Adult Learning Regional Coordinators/Networks	7	2
Regional Family Literacy Coordinators/Networks	7	0
Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Regional Coordinators/Networks	7	7
Comprehensive Community Institutions	9	7
Independent Community Organizations/Networks	3	3

Phase two of the project used some of the information gathered in phase one, such as the resources and curricula mentioned, to develop an on-line survey. This survey, attached as Appendix B, was sent out to 136 regional coordinators from the community literacy organizations outlined above. Both the questionnaire and the survey were vetted and approved by the Reading Benchmarks Advisory Team.

A mid-term activity report was submitted in mid-March and final report on April 30, 2011. In addition, a binder of examples of resource materials currently in use was submitted with the final report.

FINDINGS

Please note that, throughout this report, we indicate the number of respondents who provided a particular answer in brackets after the answer. If we do not indicate a number, it is because only one respondent provided that answer.

Phase One

Comprehensive Community Institutions

Literacy Instructors from the following CCIs were contacted for interviews:

- Bow Valley College
- Grande Prairie Regional College
- Lakeland College
- NorQuest College
- Lethbridge College
- Red Deer College
- Keyano College
- Northern Lake College
- Portage College

Of the nine programs contacted, one declined to participate and one did not deliver adult literacy programs to level one or two learners as outlined in the draft Reading Benchmark document. The results gleaned from the seven who did participate are outlined here.

Demographic information

1. The percentage of learners who are First Nation or Métis varied from a low of less than five per cent to a high of 60 to 70 per cent.
2. The percentage of learners who fall into the English as a Second Language category was similarly varied, with two colleges reporting ESL students comprised more than 90 per cent of their learners, two reporting very low ESL participation at under five per cent, and three reporting around 35 per cent.
3. Referring to the attached Reading Benchmark document and looking at descriptions for levels one and two, we asked the CCIs whether their learners fall into the low, middle or high range of levels one and two. The following represent the range of responses:
 - a. All levels of levels one and two [2]
 - b. Higher level of level two.
 - c. The range of level two only
 - d. The mid-range of levels one and two [3]

Questionnaire responses

1. The first question of the questionnaire asked respondents to provide information about the curricula and/or learning guides used for their adult literacy programs.
 - a. Six of the colleges have developed their own curricula; one used *ESL Canadian Language Benchmarks* for their beginning literacy learners (levels one and two); and one reported that its “in house” curriculum used a collection of resources like National Literacy Sites on-line along with a series of short stories. In addition to curriculum, six respondents talked of using individual learning outcomes or competencies. Individualized learner plans were developed and used, mostly for beginning readers, at four colleges. One college used learner plans for incarcerated learners only. When asked about use and type of objectives included in these learner plans, five respondents said objectives were included in learner plans and cited the following as examples:
 - i. Writing a grocery list
 - ii. Writing a short paragraph
 - iii. Developing the skills to enter adult upgrading
 - iv. Developing essential skills such as those required to qualify for a certificate e.g. hair dresser
 - b. Six of the respondents said that learning activities were included in the curriculum they used and one said that activities were available online to be used as extra-curricular support. Examples of learning activities include:
 - i. Word identification
 - ii. Oral reading
 - iii. Reading to understand
 - iv. Field trips
 - v. Writing and oral reading at higher literacy levels
 - vi. Use of Canada’s Food Guide
 - vii. Reading instructions
 - viii. Going to the library, checking out books, reading stories and answering questions
 - ix. Using *Reading Horizons* and *Pronunciation Power* software
 - c. Next, in the section of questions about curriculum, we asked participants from colleges to tell us if the curriculum they used provided specific information about what other resources might be useful. Four respondents said that the curriculum was helpful in providing advice about other resources that might be used and they provided examples such as:
 - i. *Active Skills for Reading*, Book 3
 - ii. *Grammar Right Away*
 - iii. Reading a short story in class
- Respondents also said that examples were sometimes provided but that instructors had to take responsibility for developing the additional resources.

- d. We asked respondents if the curriculum they used provided guidance about how to assess students on the successful completion of their course work. Five participants said that their curriculum did provide varying levels of advice regarding assessment of success. We heard comments like the following:
 - i. It contains tests and quizzes and various exercises.
 - ii. Yes – I develop rubrics for reading and writing.
 - iii. Learner outcomes are used as a guideline.
 - iv. Instructors develop tests.
 - v. We use *CARA* for lower-level students.
 - vi. More work is needed here, though students are well prepared for English 10 or 20 at the end of level 5 reading and writing,

Generally participants felt that it was difficult to measure progress at this early level of learning.

- e. Finally, in the first question regarding curriculum and/or learning guides, we asked respondents what they found most useful in the curriculum or learning guide used by their CCI. The following represent a range of responses to this question:
 - i. It provides direction.
 - ii. Learning outcomes are specific and clear.
 - iii. Activities are provided.

- 2. Question two dealt with using series of resources instead or in support of a formalized curricula or learning guide.
 - a. Four college respondents provided resources used along with an outline of the level of learner these are most suited to. While two interviewees said they used a learner chosen novel, the other resources outlined were not consistently named.

Level of Learner	Resource
All levels	Community newspapers and flyers and National Literacy Sites
Lower level	Laubach Literacy materials
Lower Level	<i>Passageways Anthology</i> , supported by self-developed worksheets
Higher Level	<i>Vocabulary Basics</i>
Higher Level	Groundwork for building vocabulary
ESL Students	<i>Stories Plus</i> from New Reader Press

- b. In addition to the responses provided above, respondents said other kinds of resources and approaches were used, for instance:
 - i. For higher level 2 students, novels for which they provide background and a report
 - ii. DVDs, movie clips online, worksheets developed by the instructor and movies such as *Of Mice and Men*.
 - iii. Book Lists developed by college staff

- c. Finally, question two asked respondents which of the tools were their favourites and why.
 - i. *Vocabulary Basics*
 - ii. Laubach Literacy materials
 - iii. Students' own writing
 - iv. *Step Forward Canada* and *Totally True Canada* - because of the way these tools are organized; the encourage responses from learners
3. In question three of the questionnaire, we dealt with the issue of assessment. We asked questions about assessment for appropriate placement in a course or program as well as assessment for learner progress. We also asked about the tools that are used in both instances.
- a. Of the seven individuals interviewed, six responded that initial placement assessment is completed by college administration; two said that *Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)* was used for this purpose. One respondent mentioned that their college used the *Canadian Language Benchmarks* to determine placement for ESL students. Yet another respondent reported that, for ESL students, they used the *ESL Resource Package for Alberta Communities (ERPAC)* developed by NorQuest College. Other placement assessment tools mentioned included the *CLB Literacy Placement Tool 2005* and Pat Campbell's *CARA* and *DALA*.
 - b. Two respondents reported that, in addition to the administrative assessment for placement, students also had informal conversations with instructors so that the instructor, along with the student, could determine appropriate program placement.

The table below shows a summary of the processes and tools respondents used for initial assessment.

Processes	Tools
Formal intake by colleges	<i>TABE</i>
Informal conversations with instructors	<i>CLB for ESL Students</i>
	<i>ESL Resource Package for Alberta Communities</i> developed by NorQuest College
	<i>CLB Literacy Placement Tool 2005</i>
	Pat Campbell's <i>CARA</i> and <i>DALA</i>

- c. Regarding progress assessment, comments were more varied. Respondents named a variety of tools and processes used for progress assessment:
 - i. The Gates- McGinitie Reading Test was one of three tools mentioned
 - ii. During the three reporting periods, the instructor reviews course work for completion, determines how well students are doing at their current level and makes recommendations for moving on.

- iii. Students can move up and down depending on obvious need. This is usually evident in learning process.
 - iv. Instructors and/or councilors can move students if appropriate.
 - v. Ongoing progress is measured through tests, quizzes and assignments successfully completed.
 - vi. Both observation and quizzes are used to determine progress. Additionally higher level learners have both mid-term and final exams. From time to time, the *Canadian Test of Basic Skills* is used to assess learner progress.
 - vii. Each unit in the curriculum has a test to measure progress. Additionally throughout the term we use *Reading for Understanding* cards as a tool to chart progress.
4. In question four we asked respondents about what might be useful in implementing the draft Benchmarks Framework, and responses were varied:
- a. Curriculum or course guides
 - i. see “other # c” section below
 - e. Resources such as texts, publications, websites and software
 - i. Lots of tools exist on the market – let’s not waste time and resources developing more.
 - ii. More up-to-date tools, to jazz up the learning experience, would be great.
 - b. Assessment tools
 - i. More ongoing assessment tools for measuring learner progress.
 - ii. Stronger assessment tools for placement so we know where learners might begin.
 - iii. Assessment for placement would be most useful. This (assessment tool for placement) should be consistent across the province.
 - c. Other
 - i. It would be great to have a comprehensive tool kit that included all of the above and was consistent across the province. [3]
 - ii. Professional development would help effectively deliver the new product being implemented.
5. Opportunity for additional comments revealed the following:
- a. It would be useful to know how our resources compare to the Benchmark document.
 - b. Our college is considering our appropriate place in working with low literate learners. If courses are non-credit, then they really should be delivered through community-based programs. We need to understand clearly where and how college resources are best used.

Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Programs

Demographic information

1. Seven regional coordinators were interviewed by phone and all reported that their programs or organizations delivered community-based literacy programs to adult Albertans.
2. When asked about the delivery of adult literacy programs to First Nation and Métis learners, three respondents said they have no learners from First Nations or Métis heritage; another said only 3 to 5 per cent of learners were First Nation or Métis; two reported that 10 to 20 per cent of learners were First Nation or Métis; and one said that each program was different so it was impossible to give an average percentage.
3. When asked the same question about ESL learners, the results were at the other end of the scale. One respondent reported that none of the learners were ESL; one said 40 per cent were; four respondents reported that ESL learners comprised 80 to 90 per cent of their learners; and one reported that each program was different and so it was impossible to provide an average percentage.
4. The final question in the demographic section asked VTALP respondents to refer to the Learning Benchmarks document to determine, on average, the literacy level of the learners with whom they worked.
 - a. One respondent said that the learners the program worked with often fell into the category of “reading well with challenges in oral areas.”
 - b. Four said learners would fall into a lower level.
 - c. One said a mid-level.
 - d. One felt most learners were at a high level two.

Questionnaire responses

1. The first series of questions on the questionnaire dealt with the use of formal or informal curricula or learning guides. Specifically, we asked what, if any, curricula and course guides are used in programs.
 - a. Most respondents said that they did not use formal or informal curricula or learning guides but rather built programs based on the individual needs of learners. They did say that they use many learning tools to support this approach, including;
 - i. *Ventures Basic Literacy Workbook*
 - ii. *Canadian Concepts*
 - iii. Laubach Literacy materials
 - iv. *The Oxford Picture Dictionary*
 - v. *The Challenger or Voyageur* series
 - b. One program said they used two online sites as course guides. For main-stream learners they used the Academy of Reading and the Academy of Math, and the Aztec program. For ESL learners, they used the ELLIS program.
 - c. Additionally, one of the respondents spoke of using the Montessori method for teaching new adult learners.

The next question in this series asked respondents about the learning plans they used.

- d. All respondents said that they used individualized learning plans. These learning plans were developed either by the learner individually or, most often, with the support of the tutor.
- e. Respondents were asked if learner objectives were included in learning plans and all replied that they were. Examples of learner objectives fell into two areas: personal and professional development. The following table provides examples:

Personal Objectives	Workplace or Professional Objectives
Reading and understanding letters from my child's school	Filling out a job application
Reading and understanding my child's report card	Preparing for the GED
Understanding what my child is reading	Preparing for workplace essential skills development like: H2S safety courses First Aid Other safety courses Re-qualifying as a hairdresser
Wanting to read to my child or grandchild	Developing the capacity to enter adult upgrading
Gaining a learner's and driver's license	
Writing a grocery list	
Writing a short paragraph	

- f. When asked for what kind and what level of learner the curriculum and course guides they used were developed, all respondents except one reported that there was no difference from the answers outlined in the demographic section.
 - i. The individual who used a more formal curriculum said that the curriculum was designed for low level one learners and ESL learners where oral skills were most needed.
- g. The next several questions in the curriculum series asked about learning activities, resources and assessments found in the curriculum or learning guide used.
 - i. Four respondents had no responses to these questions because they did not use formal curriculum or learning guides.
 - ii. Three used existing resources as curriculum or support to curriculum, the following tools and activities were mentioned:

Resource/Curriculum	Activities Included
Laubach	Finding the word that correlates to pictures
ELISS	A focus on pronunciation using video clips
Aztec	Filling in the blanks, listening and answering questions

- h. These three respondents said that the curricula they used did provide additional information about extra resources that could be used, for instance:
 - i. Montessori has two tools, *Pictures to Sounds* and *Pictures to Words*
 - ii. *Step Forward Canada* series, where learners fill in the blanks and circle the correct word
 - iii. Online tools such as Aztec are usually up-to-date and provide online resources
 - iv. Laubach provides a workbook and each student gets his or her own
 - i. When asked if the curricula or learning guide used provides progress assessment, one respondent said the curriculum used did not and another said Laubach and ELLIS provide tools to determine progress.
 - j. Finally, these three respondents told us what they found most useful in using their chosen curriculum:
 - i. Two respondents said that everything is in one place – “very useful for tutors”
 - ii. “When using an online system learners can stop and go at their own pace.”
2. Question two in the questionnaire asked those interviewed to speak about the series of resources used.
- a. All of the VTALP regional coordinators interviewed said they did use resources extensively. With the noted exception of Laubach, which was mentioned twice, and resources from Grass Roots Press, where were mentioned four times, there was very little overlap in the resources used by regional coordinators.
 - b. The first in this series of questions asked respondents to provide the names or types of resources used and, where possible, to identify the level of learner most appropriate for the resource. The following table represents their responses:

Resource	Learner Level
Children’s Reading Library	Low
<i>Sing Song Read and Write</i>	Low
<i>Easy True Stories</i>	Not provided
<i>Side by Side</i>	Not provided
Tools developed by NorQuest College (e.g. <i>Dave’s Café</i> on-line)	Not provided
Grass Roots Press materials and resources	Low to medium
First Nations Press	Low to medium
NAS software: Tense Buster ESL and Literacy Adult Education	Low to medium
GED preparation book: H2S manual	Medium
<i>Looking for Work</i> , developed by Bow Valley College	Not Provided
Canada’s Food Guide	Not provided
Laubach Literacy materials	All

<i>Goodman's Five Star Stories</i>	Not provided
<i>Step Forward Canada</i>	Low to medium
<i>Oxford Picture Dictionary</i>	Low to medium
<i>Style of Vocabulary Canada</i>	Low to medium
<i>All in One – Straight Forward Canada</i>	Low to medium
<i>Being Canadian</i>	Low to medium
<i>Totally True</i>	Medium to high

- c. Of the resources listed above the following were cited as being favourites. Where a reason was given for this, we include it below:
- i. *Step Forward Canada* - "organized in an easy-to-use format and uses an 'encouraging' approach"
 - ii. *Totally True Canada* – "gets favorable response from learners"
 - iii. All Grass Roots Press resources – "user friendly and versatile" [2]
 - iv. NAS Software *Tense Busters* – "easy to use and very effective"
 - v. *English Express* – "was used a great deal and is missed"
 - vi. *Oxford Picture Dictionary*
 - vii. *Rosetta Stone*
3. Question three in the questionnaire asked respondents about the tools and process used for learner assessment.
- a. VTALP Regional Coordinators seemed to use similar tools to determine both learner placement and progress. The tools they spoke of for ESL learners specifically were:
 - i. *ERPAC* – by NorQuest College [3]
 - ii. *Oral Picture Assessment – Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Placement 2005* [3]
 - iii. *Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)*
 - b. For learners other than ESL, the list is more extensive:
 - i. *DARA – Diagnostic Adult Literacy Assessment* [2]
 - ii. *CALA – Canadian Adult Reading Assessment* [5]
 - iii. *Bader Reading and Language Inventory* [2]
 - iv. *Canadian Literacy Benchmarks – On Target* [3]
 - v. *TABE – Test of Basic Education* – by Bow Valley College
 - vi. *CAAT – Canadian Adult Academic Test* – by Bow Valley College
 - vii. Southern Alberta Language Assessment Service – Lethbridge College
 - viii. Self-developed by the VTALP
 - c. When asked how and when they use the tools and processes, responses ranged from just at the beginning and ending of each course to throughout the course. Several respondents also spoke of developing portfolio for learners that included assessments and samples of learners' ongoing work throughout the course. One respondent said that it was difficult to find appropriate and consistent assessment tools.

4. Finally, in question four, interviewees were asked what would be most useful in implementing the Reading Benchmarks Tool.
 - a. Two said that, a full “Learning Tool Kit” for low level adult learners would be a wonderful asset especially for new coordinators, and “it would be useful in ensuring consistency of approach.”
 - b. Two spoke about the need for consistent curriculum with streams for ESL, family, and academic needs.
 - c. Two said it would be useful to have a list of resources that might be used.
 - d. One spoke of the need for ongoing assessment for measuring learner progress.
 - e. Two respondents spoke about readiness to learn, saying that some sort of “Learning-to-Learn Tool” would be very useful. “Instructors are frustrated because learners don’t seem to know how to learn, perhaps a pre-learning section or more professional development could be developed to address this.”

5. When asked if they had any other comments, one individual wanted to comment about the loss of *English Express*: “It was a valued tool and something like this would be most useful.” Another spoke about the need to professionalize the literacy instructor field, stating that minimum standards of education and experience should be determined for instructors and facilitators.

Community Adult Learning Regional Resource Network

Demographic information

There are seven regional coordinators with the Community Learning Network. Five were interviewed in this study; one declined to participate as, in her words, her program had nothing to do with adult literacy programming; and another was interviewed through a simultaneous project being undertaken with aboriginal programs.

Of the five contacted through one-on-one phone conversation, three more identified that their Adult Learning Program did not deliver adult literacy. Some said adult literacy programming was provided through the VTALPs in their region. Two of regional coordinators said that their Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) did offer adult literacy programming.

The following information reflects the findings from the two program that do offer adult literacy programming: 5 to 10 per cent of learners are First Nation or Métis; 35 to 50 per cent of learners are ESL; and learners in both programs are at a low to mid-ranged, as outlined in the draft reading benchmarks document.

Questionnaire responses

1. Regarding Curriculum/Learning Guides:
 - a. One respondent said they used: *ERPAC* with mid-level learners and *On Target* with low level learners. This individual said that learning plans are developed and include elements such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. This program also uses learner objectives. Regarding learning activities, this respondent said that *ERPAC* included interactive game such as “Verbs, Past, Present and Future.” *On Target* uses diagrams with dialogue to answer questions or expand on dialogue. This respondent said that *Step Forward* does provide information about resources that may be used to compliment this tool. This respondent said all of these curricula were very useful especially in the area of assessment.
 - b. The second respondent interviewed said that the programs provided through her organization did not use formalized curricula or learning guides. Instead the facilitator develops a learning guide based on learner needs. Individualized learner plans include both academic and personal goals. This respondent used *ERPAC*, *CARA* and *CLB* to assist in all areas of activity suggestions and assessment.
 - c. Additional resources used these two respondents are:
 - i. The *Challenger* workbook
 - ii. *Side by Side*
 - iii. *Tell Me More*
 - iv. *English Express*
 - v. *Oxford Pictionary Dictionary*
2. When we asked about placement and progress assessment, both respondents said that they did use assessment tools. One individual said that “students who are on an academic path like processes and tools that are more formalized.” For both placement and progress, this program used *ERPAC* and *CLB* tools along with an interview process. The other respondent said that the *CLB Placement Test* was used at initial intake and that the *Early Learning Progress Profile Tool* was used for ongoing progress assessment.
3. Finally the two individuals interviewed outlined their thoughts and needs regarding the implementation of the Reading Benchmarks:
 - a. One said that formalized curricula and resources were plentiful and that a new Framework was not especially needed. This individual spoke about the need for assessment tools especially in a software format.
 - b. The other respondent said that support and tools in all areas of curriculum, resources and assessment were needed. This individual said that curriculum and assessment would be needed most.
4. In the area of additional comments one interviewee said, “training in plain language – that can be easily passed along to facilitators and tutors – would be very useful”.

Family Literacy Regional Network Team

Demographic information

The Family Literacy Regional Network team consists of seven coordinators and one Training and Services Coordinator. Of the seven regional coordinators, five were interviewed. One was interviewed through the simultaneous Aboriginal Project and another was a regional coordinator for both the Family Literacy and Community Adult Learning Programs. Her data was gathered through the Community Learning Network data. The Family Literacy programs throughout the province provide valuable service in the continuum of adult literacy with their learners coming from all areas of First Nation/Métis, ESL and mainstream families.

Questionnaire responses

Family Literacy Programs deliver family-based literacy programs through tools such as Rhymes That Bind, Parent-Child Mother Goose and Books for Babies, and use the corresponding resources. Strictly speaking, family literacy programs, by the nature of their work, do not deliver adult literacy programs to adult Albertans. More information on the work and philosophy of the Family Literacy Network can be obtained at www.famlit.ca

The data gathered through the interviews was not deemed relevant to this study and so is not included.

Independent Interviews

Demographic information

Three interviews were conducted with service delivery organizations outside of the networks mentioned. One interview was with a family literacy provider; one with a service provider who worked with individuals recently incarcerated; and one with an individual whose program, housed at a CCI, is strictly for with individuals with disabilities.

Questionnaire responses

Of these three, only the comments from the disabilities program differed from the opinions already heard through the study. This is a one-to-one program that uses specially designed software called Speech Assisted Reading and Writing (SARAW). Learners are encouraged to develop three learning goals for the semester and at the end of the semester they are asked to assess their progress or success. This self-guided program allows for visual and audio components, and other resources such as crossword puzzles, the *English Express* and flash cards compliment the software. There is no formal assessment in this program but there is an orientation so the learner and facilitator/tutor have a chance to get acquainted prior to the program beginning. Portfolios are used as a positive way for the learner to see how far they have come. When the Reading Benchmarks are implemented, this respondent felt

curriculum would be most important for her program because it would allow new tutors to work more effectively with learners.

Phase Two

Building on the responses from phase one of the study, an online survey was developed and sent electronically to 136 community, family literacy, volunteer tutor adult literacy and community adult learning programs across the province.

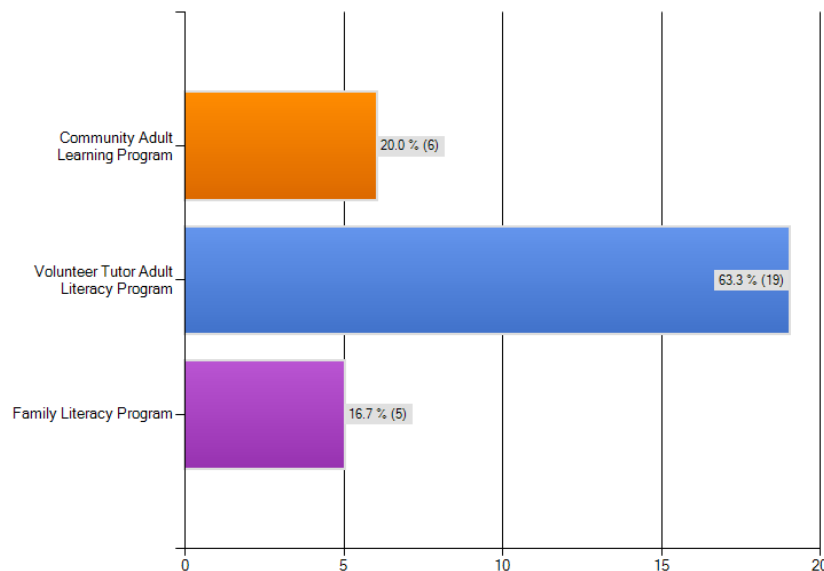
Response rates

136	Total number of surveys sent
31	Total number of responses
23	Responses that continued past question number 5

Demographic information

The following data was gathered from the survey's first six questions:

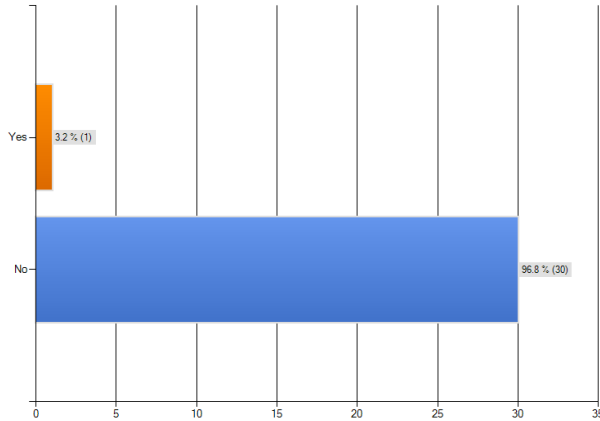
1. Names of respondents – Not included in this report
2. Whom do you work for? Please choose only one program. If you work for more than one program, please complete the survey and then come back and do it again for your second program.



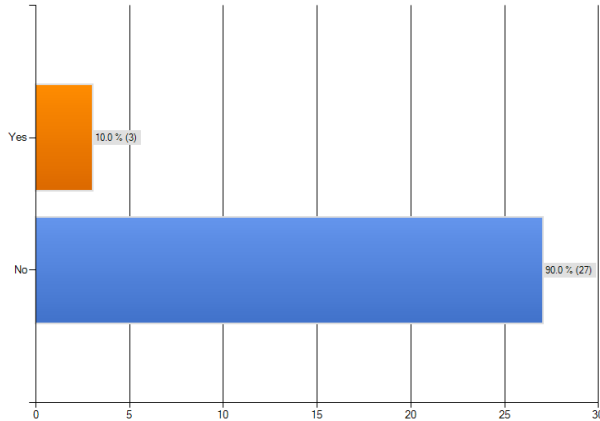
Other (please specify)

- I am a coordinator for both a VTALP and a family literacy program.
- I am both the CALP Coordinator and VTALP Coordinator
- I teach ESL. We are willing to provide literacy courses but there is little interest at this point.
- Aboriginal Family Literacy

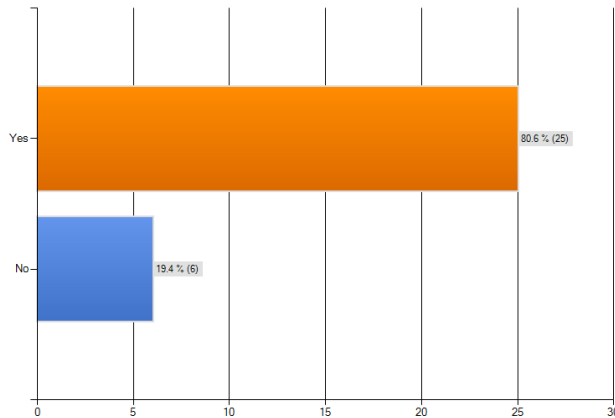
3. Have you been interviewed for this project by Pam Crosby?



4. Have you been interviewed for this project by Monica Kreiner?



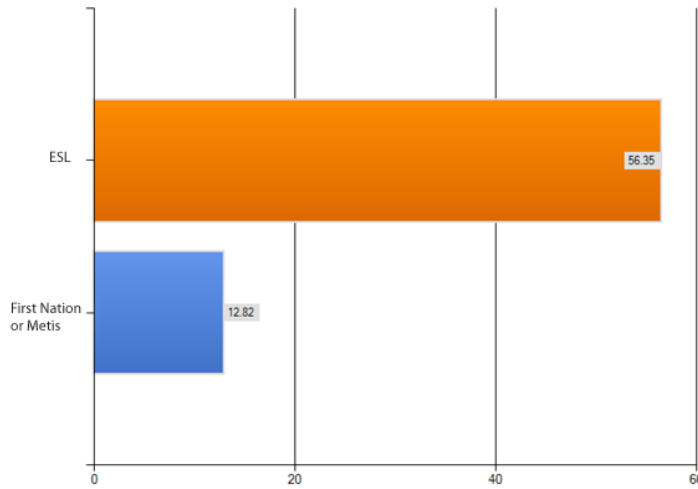
5. Does your organization provide adult literacy programming to levels one and two students as described in the benchmark document provided?



Summary of responses to question 5:

- CALPs
total of 6 responses:
5 = Yes 1 = No
- VTALPs
total of 20 responses:
17 = Yes 2 = No 1 = no response
- Family Literacy Programs
total of 5 responses:
2 = Yes 3 = No

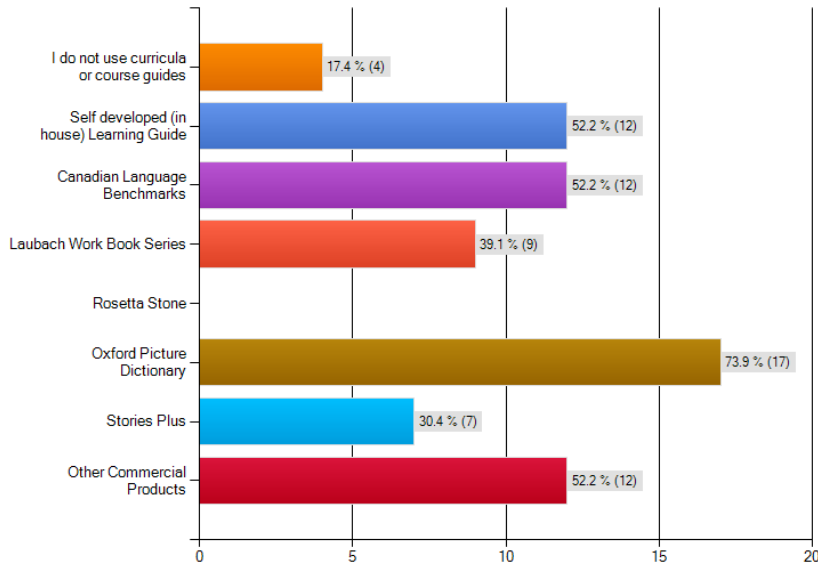
6. On average, approximately what percentage of your learners are ESL or First Nation/ Métis?



Survey responses

While questions number 1 through 6 gathered demographic data, questions number 7 through 18 on the survey gathered data about current curriculum, resources and assessments in use. It also gathered information about what would be most useful in implementing Reading Benchmarks. Please note that all data provided by respondents is included as it was given.

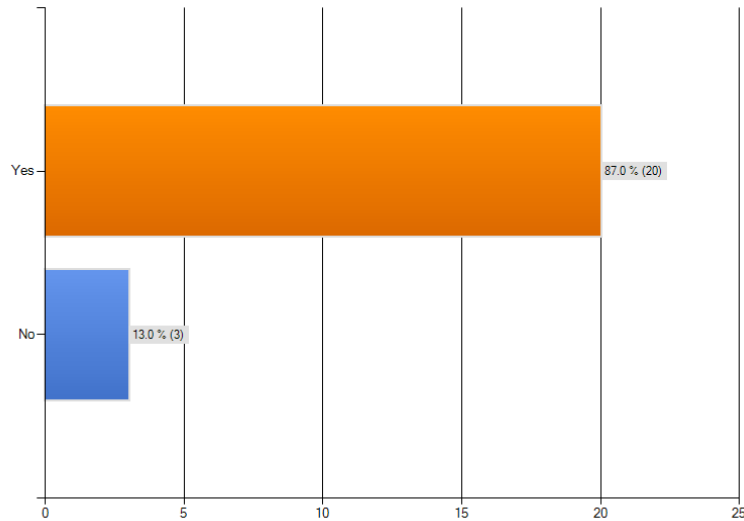
7. What, if any, curricula or course guides are used in your program?



Please provide the names of other commercial products.

- The curricula or course guides we use for the program consist of the following: Remedia Publications - Real Life Math McCracken : Reading is only the Tiger's Tail Grassroots EDCON Publishing Group AGS Material High Noon Books Making Connections Series National Geographic Series High Noon Series
 - *Voyageur, Challenger, Reading for Today, Grass Roots Press Easy Readers*
 - Focus on Grammar English - No Problem!
 - *Voyager Series*
 - We use the following material to meet the needs of the learners in the program: AGS Materials EDCON Publishing Group Making Connections Series National Geographic Series Remedia Publications - Real Life Math Grassroots books and resources High Noon Reading Materials
 - We offer basic essential skill programs in the CALC program area based on needs in the Community *Canadian Adult Reading Assessment, Writing Out Loud*, Northwest Territories Literacy Council's many resources, Silver Series, books that are introductions to the computer
 - *Step Forward series*
 - We have quite a large collection of ESL and Adult Basic Education resources available (several thousand) from which our tutors and/or students can choose. We also subscribe to many licensed databases, and have bookmarked hundreds of relevant websites, which our students can access on our computers. To assess our students, we use *CARA* or *DALA*. Some students come to use having been assessed by Southern Alberta Language Assessment Services (using CLB levels)
 - *Challenger*, personal stories
 - *English for Everyday Activities* that comes with a CD, *English for Work Activities* with CD, both published by New Readers Press
 - *Step Up Canada, Canadian Concepts, Grammar in Context*
 - *Side by Side* Levels 1 through 4
 - *Challenger Adult Reading Series, NorQuest College's Job Literacy (the Skills for Jobs series), LINC*
 - Psycan Basic Math textbooks MathPower 7-12 Alberta Programs of Studies, ELA and Math Alberta Education approved textbooks and literature (for ELA programming)
 - Step Forward Canada 1 and 2, *Canadian Concepts: Books 1 through 6, English - No Problem: Literacy and Books 1 through 4, Voyager - Books 1 through 5, LINC - 1 through 4, ERPAC Vocabulary Boosters 1 and 2*
8. What is your favourite curricula or course guide?
- We predominantly use in-house program manuals and resources. These are learner-centered and strength-based in approach.
 - We use all the resources as listed above. The Remedia Publications is one that is the easiest to use and most relevant for everyday mathematics skills.

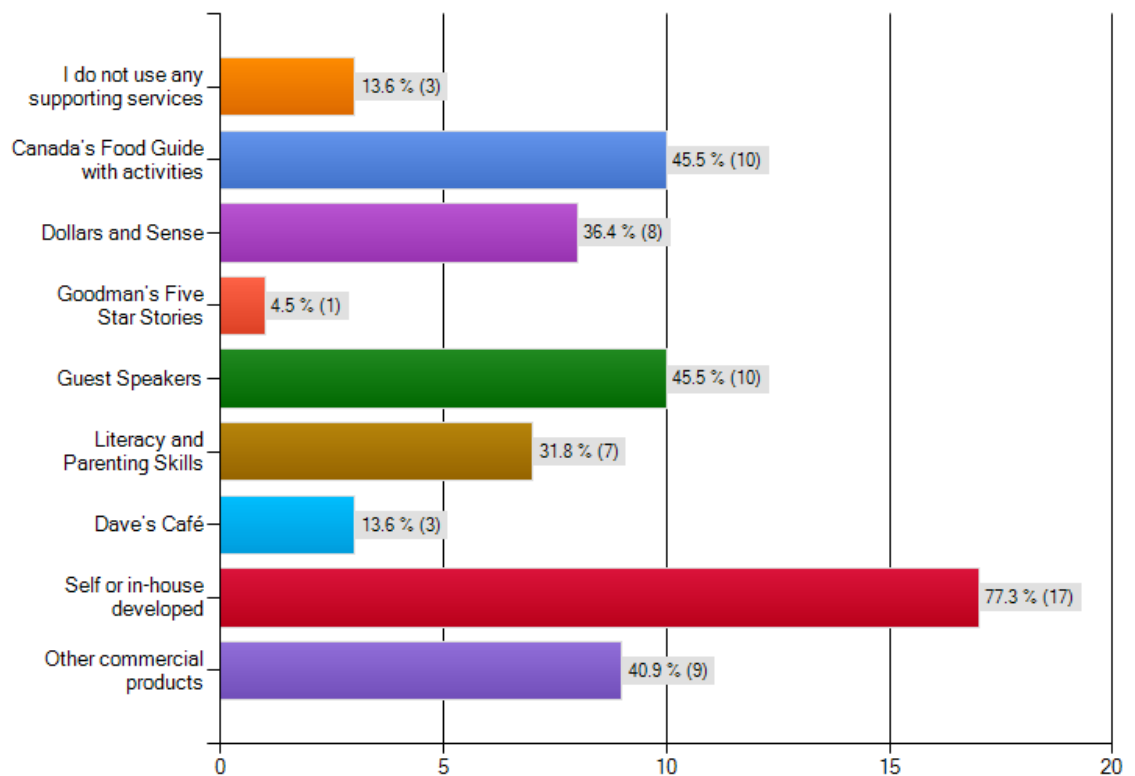
- *Canadian Language Benchmark*
 - *Voyager Series*
 - Learners present their own needs: I don't get to pick a favourite
 - We develop individual programs that are focused toward functional application for the learners. The material listed above is used in varying situations to meet the interests and ability levels of the learners. The workbooks I most recommend are the *Voyager Series* and the *Activist Series*.
 - Picture dictionary
 - Since we gear the student's learning to their goals, we choose a resource that best matches their goals and the tutor and student work through that one (or sometimes a few) resources. We do not develop curricula for the tutor to work through. Most of the new resources already do that for you - in that they have a reading, writing, and, grammar aspect to them (if ABE) and also a speaking, listening and pronunciation aspect (if ELL). That would be hard to pick. I have many favourites - a lot of which come from Grass Roots Press. Also, *From Sound to Sentence*, *English in Action*, *Voyager*, *Vocabulary Power*, etc. are just a very few.
 - Using real material with the *Oxford Picture Dictionary*
 - We really don't use a course or curricula. The tutors and I use "REAL" materials (coupons, forms, pictures, etc.).
 - Very much depends on the needs of the learner. We have a small program that is just getting up and running again with every student having very different needs -so there isn't a favourite course guide at this time.
 - I leave the choice to the tutor to determine, with my guidance if requested.
 - *Side by Side*, Levels 1 through 4
 - *Oxford Picture Dictionary* for ESL and *Challenger* for ABE
 - *Psycan Basic Math* textbooks
 - Our tutors use a variety of tools to help them develop their lesson plans.
9. Do you use individualized learner outcomes as a guide for program planning? (See graph on following page.)
- If "yes," can you please provide an example of a learner outcome?
- The learner will be able to: use the Internet to find needed bus routes; use a mouse on the computer; use "Google" on the computer to search for needed items; read a certain number of sight words each session.
 - Throughout additional one-on-one tutoring; one example would be to be able to write the names of the days.
 - The learner will be able to distinguish the long and short vowel phonemes.
 - A learner wanted to use the bank machine. A series of lessons was planned to help her do this.
 - Obtain driver's license. Obtain other certificates e.g. nail manicure, etc.
 - Learner can read and understand customer orders.



- The learner will be able to use the Internet to find needed bus routes. The learner will be able to use a mouse on the computer. The learner will be able to write down his or her name, address, phone number and emergency contact information
- Completed a goal: for example, has learned how to use email
- We have the ESL group who basically want to improve their understanding of idioms and adages so they are able to communicate better. There are a number of Canadian-born learners who want to get certified as various types of laborers. We have people who want to improve their literacy skills so they can either maintain their jobs or get a promotion. We have people on Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped who want to find part-time work but first need to improve their skills. The people who come into the centre can be loosely placed into two streams of learning. We have well educated English Language learners who are quite familiar with the process of learning to read. These people just need to be walked through these steps, being helped when they don't understand some concepts. The other stream of people we have are those who tried to learn to read in school but failed for a variety of reasons or perhaps never had the opportunity to go to school. These people need much different help than the previous group. They need to buy into the importance of reading and begin to believe they can learn. The material used with these people is based on their background knowledge and their area of intelligence, and needs to be of high interest to them so they will be motivated to continue learning.
- We have over 180 students in our program whose goals all vary. Some want to get their driver's licenses, some to pass their Canadian citizenship test, some to get into college upgrading, some to simply be able to read to their children or read their mail. Yes, we use the learner's goals and feedback when planning curriculum and making in-house curriculum
- When I interview new students, I try to identify their goals. Then when we setup the tutor-student meeting, we all discuss these. As the student and tutor proceed, they continually evaluate and re-evaluate goals and the tutor finds appropriate materials to accomplish them. As the coordinator, I help the tutors find resources.

- Learner outcomes in our program are based on the needs and goals of the learner that are discussed at the initial interview and assessment stage. They could be things like reading a local paper, having a basic conversation on the phone, creating a resume, writing a letter, completing a novel and understanding it, etc.
- The learner will be able to read information at work
- A learner wants to pass the GED exam, driver's license test, Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), apprenticeship entrance exam, etc.
- Successfully reading children's notes from teachers.
- Only loosely. Our curriculum is designed to take students from where they are to a grade-9 level in reading, writing and math. This is not necessarily practical for all students, thus we use individualized learner outcomes in those particular cases (i.e., helping a student study for their learner's permit).
- "I want to increase my English skills one level by Sept.30, 2011."
- We use the CLB Can Do lists as a learning outcome guide.

10. Please indicate which supporting resources you use in your program.



Other Commercial Products named:

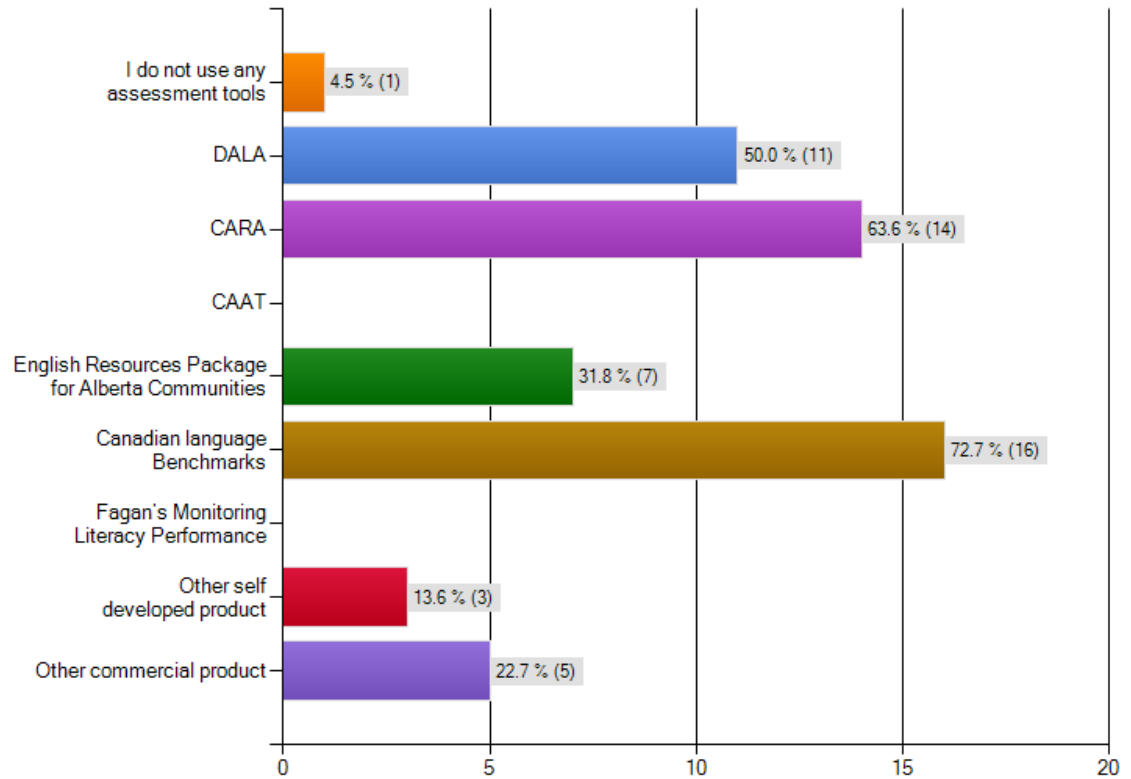
- Word Recognition : Mary Tarasoff Edu Math Materials, Remedia Publications - Real Life Math

- Grassroots Making Connections, AGS Material High Noon Series, EDCON Publishing Group Spelling Toolkit Series, Litstart The ABC's of Practical Literacy
- We use the following resources for our learners in the tutor program: EDCON Publishing Group, AGS Material Remedia Publications - Real Life Math, Grassroots Making Connections Series, National Geographic Series, High Noon Book Series, Mary Tarasoff Reading Resources
- Low-level literacy books available through Grassroots Press.
- *English Express* newspaper (no longer exists), *Step Forward* Series New Readers Press - Challenger Series Teaching Reading to Adults by Pat Campbell Grass Roots Press - biography series
- Those listed above and we have a library with resources
- High interest, low vocabulary short stories
- Textbooks and literature approved by Alberta Education for use in English Language Arts and math classrooms.

11. What is your favourite resource?

- Resources are again in-house developed. We focus on applicable information like parenting, child development at an appropriate level for our families. The activities that support this type of information provide valuable adult education and literacy assistance.
- Mary Tarasoff's material
- Remedia Publications
- Guest speakers are a really nice supporting resource because they can provide expertise in an area of interest to the learners. We also use a lot of booklets from the Grassroots Press.
- I have many; it depends on learner.
- *Picture Dictionary*
- *Litstart*
- *CLB* and *CARA*
- We find that the Remedia Publications and Mary Tarasoff's word recognition material are very useful resources in our program.
- NWT Literacy Council
- *Voyager F - 6*
- No favourite - depends on learner requirements
- Again, too hard to choose.
- Real material
- Overall I find I use a website called "dreamstime" to download free stock pictures since pictures are such a valuable resource
- A variety of games that help learners and tutors to share conversations and practice various reading, writing and speaking skills. Wintergreen and Scholars Choice are two of the suppliers we use most.
- It used to be *English Express*!
- We like the *Oxford Picture Dictionaries*.

12. If you use any assessment tools for placement or to measure progress, could you tell us a bit more about the tools that you use by checking off all that you use:



Please provide the names of other commercial products.

- *TABE: Test of Adult Basic Education* – This test is used within the other programs in the Mount Royal Transitional Vocational Program.
- Will begin using *DALA* in the future.
- *CLB Literacy Placement Tool, Bader Reading and Language Inventory, Wide Range Achievement Test*
- Looking seriously at Aztec program that supports learners from low grade 2 level to university
- *TABE: Test of Adult Basic Education* – This assessment tool is used within other programs in the Transitional Vocational program.
- Schnell Spelling Test, local math test, ESL Literacy Placement
- CLB checkmark lists
- Reading - Alberta Education reading assessment
- *Challenger Adult Reading Series* (intake assessment package)
- We use a modified version of the Alberta mathematics provincial achievement test questions (grades 3, 6 and 9) as our math intake assessment, and the grade 3 Alberta ELA PAT to assess writing levels at intake, using the Alberta Education Narrative Essay Scoring guides for grades 3, 6 and 9.
- Bader Assessment

13. What is your favourite assessment tool?

- I use the word list from *CARA* to find a starting point or *DALA* if the student can't use the word list. I only use "assessment tools" to find a start point. I have advised the tutors I am always willing to re-assess but they feel comfortable with their own assessments
- DALA [4]
- CARA [9]
- CLB [7]
- ERPAC
- ESL Literacy Placement
- Alberta Education Reading Assessment

14. In implementing the Reading Benchmarks, can you tell us what would be most helpful in the following area: Curriculum or course guide

- The benchmarks will be helpful guides to assist us when determining the level of material required as well as the direction of goal setting for the learner within the tutor program.
- Focusing on really low benchmarks (just emerging from the Pre-BM).
- Checklist of skills for each benchmark
- Not sure
- The benchmarks are helpful as guides to assist in developing the program for the learners. It is helpful to match the benchmarks with resources that are available for that level.
- SHORT curriculum. Many curricula available on the Internet are much too long and throw people off, for example *I Can Vote: a user-friendly guide to voting in Canada* by Elections Canada
- To have this wide open so literacy coordinators realize the importance of selecting material that match the learner's background knowledge and area of expertise. The literature tells us that in order to reach struggling readers, they must feel a connection to the material they are reading.
- I am satisfied with what is available.
- Don't use them.
- Both
- The following resources are valuable because of pictures and the CDs that the student can take these home to practice, which helps them improve their English: 1) *English for Everyday Activities* with CD, 2) *English for Work Activities* with CD. These are published by New Readers Press.
- Standardized reading levels in resources and assessments and a corresponding course guide/manual.
- Categorization: Home, Work, Shopping, etc.
- It depends on the program and the program's outcomes. For programming that is meant to transition adults onto post-secondary learning, you must be following the Alberta program

of studies in each area that the student is working on if that student is to be successful in any of our college or university programs.

- I would have many concerns with implementing the reading benchmarks in a family literacy program. Parents may feel uncomfortable being assessed as they enter a program, as the stepping stone is often their children

15. In implementing the Reading Benchmarks, can you tell us what would be most helpful in the following area: Resources, i.e. textbooks, publications, websites, software, etc.

- Canadian-referenced resources with a lot of visual support. Simple is better.
- Suggested activities / resources for each benchmark
- Software
- It would be very helpful to match the benchmarks with resources that are available for each level.
- Websites, online resources
- A wide-open choice of textbooks, publications, websites and software with perhaps a selection of the top 10 websites and feedback on some of the software that is appropriate for adult learners.
- I am satisfied with what is available.
- Canadian content
- Both but usually publications
- Like I said, my favourite website called "dreamstime" to download free stock pictures since pictures are such a valuable resource
- A categorized list of recommended resources sorted by the skill that is learned, corresponding levels and where to purchase them.
- Somewhere I could find a list of Canadian resources. I seem to be able to find American lists but not Canadian.
- More adult-centered readers at levels 1 through 3. Lower-level newspaper/current events publication.
- Having more resources evaluated according to CLB standards. It would be great to have a website with this information or to be able to suggest a book that coordinators would like leveled to a CLB level.
- See above for students working at level 3 or higher. When working with students at the very lowest levels (below 3), there are, unfortunately, limited resources available, particularly when you consider the fact that a significant percentage of adults at those levels are suffering from severe learning impairments. Read and Write Gold (or any other higher end text-to-speech software) is essential for learners who cannot read to begin to engage with text. Dragon Naturally Speaking (or other high-end speech-to-text software) is a powerful tool that can be used with students who have limited writing (as well as reading skills) to enable them to put their ideas to paper.
- Combination
- It will be helpful to have lists of resources that match each level within the benchmarks. It will be helpful to have age appropriate material that matches the curriculum.

16. In implementing the Reading Benchmarks, can you tell us what would be most helpful in the following area: Assessment tools

- It will be helpful to have the assessment tool linked with the course guides and linked with the resources. It will be helpful to have age-appropriate reading material.
- Tasks to confirm achievement of each benchmark
- Common learning disabilities in adults that are often ignored or missed during their school years challenge our learner and, while we do not have the expertise to assess them, we often recognize there is a learning disability. Where to begin? For example, dyslexia: a lot to know about this, but what will help us during our journey with the learner as well as his/her own journey beyond our relationship?
- The assessment tools, benchmarks and resources should be linked at each level. It would help to know of assessment tools that can be given to small groups of learners.
- Integrate into existing tools
- I like the *CARA*, it's a useful diagnostic tool to help determine the reading levels of students and the areas where they need to improve.
- I am satisfied with what is available
- The ones we have work very well, need no improvement.
- Can Do lists
- I find the *CARA* and *DALA* are fine to find a starting point.
- Equivalent measures between *CARA* and reading benchmarks/CLB that make it easier to know which resources should be used for each learner.
- *CARA* and *DALA* to a lesser extent seem to be fairly adequate assessment tools.
- Having an easy-to-use tool . . .
- We have really started moving towards the summative assessments and utilizing portfolios to capture student work. More tools and strategies in this area would be welcome.

17. In implementing the Reading Benchmarks, can you tell us what would be most helpful in the following area: Other

- In question 6, only ESL and First Nation or Métis were listed. We are a program that works with Persons with Disabilities. This choice was not listed as a choice for us, the Mount Royal Transitional Vocational Program programs for persons with disabilities.
- Quicker ways to determine outside supports, alternatives to written exams (GED). Why do our learners who never got diagnosed still have to do without supports?
- It is difficult to obtain adult, age-appropriate resources for individuals with level one and two literacy and numeracy levels.
- The most important piece in this job is being able to tell learners they are the ones in control in the tutoring sessions. What they want is what the tutor will help them achieve. The learners we get who have never succeeded before in a school system love coming to the Centre for Family Literacy because we listen and we care. Some students come in with very strong skills in the area of phonics but struggle with comprehension. Others can

comprehend material very well but struggle with sounding words out. Each person is treated as an individual and not put into a set curriculum.

- Again, the tools I have at my fingertips now seem to be working very well for me.
- Any real life material, material for Canadian citizenship study that is written at a CLB 1.
- It is clear that there are deficiencies in the print-based resources available for our lowest level learners, but the significant resources that are most needed are qualified teachers and reading specialists to work with these learners. It is not enough to place a learner with a tutor, whose exposure to literacy, in many cases, was the two-hour training session they had before they started. It is imperative that certified, qualified teachers and core subject specialists are working with these individuals if our goal is to bring all learners to a level 3 or higher. Remember that most of the people that we work with went through our educational system, and after eight to 12 years, depending on the student, they still cannot read. This indicates that they are potentially suffering from significant barriers that even a highly funded and structured educational system such as the one that exists in Alberta could not overcome. If we are to have any hope of helping these people, intensive and adequate resourcing needs to be put in place and kept in place.

18. Do you have anything you would like to add regarding your current learning documents or what might be useful in the future?

- I don't see the Reading Benchmarks as a great fit with family literacy programming. I can see some benefits to our adult tutor program but learners in that program are intentionally coming to improve their literacy skills. Family members attending family literacy programs are there for a range of reasons and I think many would be opposed to having their literacy level assessed as they enter a program. A proper reading assessment takes time and we simply don't have the time in a one- to two-hour program to assess all of the parents' reading levels, and I don't think that would make the best use of our time with these families.
- It is difficult to obtain adult age-appropriate resources for individuals with low literacy and numeracy levels. Some of the assessment tools for placement are cost-prohibitive and they are unable to be used within a small group. Since we are located in a library and our collection is fully catalogued and available to the public, if Alberta Reading Benchmarks, are developed, I do not anticipate using them here. All of our resources have been catalogue to the CARA levels making it very easy for staff, tutors or students to choose the appropriate level based on the student's assessment outcomes. Adding a different reading benchmark would create too much, possibly unnecessary, work.
- We need more practical materials: what to expect from your school, talking to your child's teacher, etc.
- After the initial assessment, I find "real" materials like pictures, items and personal goals (filling out forms, where to find resources, etc.) are the best learning tools.
- I have been in my position for about one year and really enjoy it. When I started, there was no overlap between me and the previous coordinator and no training until New Coordinator training was offered in St. Albert eight months later. This seems to be the situation for many

- new coordinators. It would be very helpful to have a go-to guide that everyone uses to assess and create learning plans for each learner whether ELL or adult literacy learner.
- In question 6, you gave a choice of ESL or First Nation or Métis. You did not include Persons with Disabilities as a category to check off. It is difficult to obtain adult, age-appropriate resources for individuals with level one and two literacy and numeracy levels. Some of the assessment tools for placement purposes are cost-prohibitive and are unable to be used within a small group

THEMES AND CONCLUSION

The intent of this study was to understand the curriculum, resources and assessments currently being used by Comprehensive Community Institutions and community-based literacy programs in delivery to learners who are a) adult and b) at levels one and two on the draft Reading Benchmarks document. In addition, the study asked for feedback on the implementation of the Reading Benchmark Framework. Through the conduct of the study we found the following:

Current Tools and Delivery

Not all Comprehensive Community Institutions (CCIs) offer adult literacy programs to the audience we have described. Of the ones who do, some are trying to remove themselves from non-credit program delivery. Their preferred option would be to refer learners to the Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Programs (VTALPs) in their area. Currently a majority of CCIs do deliver adult literacy programs to lower level learners. The curriculum, resources and assessment tools vary greatly between them. Many respondents throughout the study said they used the tools and resources developed by NorQuest College.

Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Programs do offer the type of adult literacy programming described in the Benchmarks Framework to the audiences described. This is most often done in informal ways and so many do not use formalized tools. They opt instead to use learner outcomes and community resources that are easy to use and find, like flyers, Canada's Food Guide, etc. There is vast inconsistency in both the tools used and the delivery system. There is no indication that the curricula, resources and assessments used are "approved" by any organization or government.

Community Adult Learning Programs fall into three delivery categories:

1. Funding CALPs: those who fund other service providers in their community to provide adult learning
2. Program delivery CALPs: those who use their funding to deliver programs in their own communities
3. Funding and delivery CALPs: those who do a little of both

The Community Learning Network, the umbrella organization for all CALPs, has a broader mandate than the provision of adult literacy programs. As a result, while their CALP members fund, deliver and partner to provide adult learning programs, it seems only a small portion of their funding is directly targeted to the delivery of adult literacy programs. Where CALPs deliver adult literacy programs we found that, like the VTALPs, there is no basic or gold-level standard for the resources being used.

All family literacy programs understand themselves to deliver adult literacy programming through family literacy tools such as Books for Babies, Rhymes That Bind, Literacy and Parenting Skills and the like. Their programs do not fit into the criteria outlined by this project as providing adult literacy programs to individuals who are levels one and two as described by the Reading Benchmarks document.

Future – With the Implementation of Reading Benchmarks

One-on-one interview results

There was general support among those interviewed for the implementation of the Reading Benchmarks. Inconsistency appeared when we asked what would be most valuable in areas of curriculum, resources and assessments. Some respondents wanted all three and some indicated a preference for one or two of the elements. There was no consensus about which of the three elements was most needed.

Comprehensive Community Institutions: Three of the individuals interviewed supported the idea of a comprehensive tool kit (curriculum, resources and assessment) that would provide consistency for adult literacy learners in Alberta. Consistent standards were seen to be a benefit of this comprehensive approach. The others interviewees indicated a need for various components of the comprehensive tool kit, but there was not consistency of opinion about which component might be most important.

Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Programs: The responses provided were consistent with those provided by the individuals interviewed working in CCIs. Two VTALP regional coordinators wanted a comprehensive tool kit while the rest all spoke to needing various components of such a tool kit (again with no consistency about which elements would be most important). One individual spoke of the high turn-over in literacy tutors and thought this comprehensive kit would make it much easier for new tutors to be effective sooner.

Community Adult Learning Programs: Of the two interviewed by phone, one said that formalized curriculum and resources were plentiful and a new framework was not especially needed. This individual spoke about the need for assessment tools especially in a software format. The other respondent said that support and tools in all areas of curriculum, resources and assessment were needed. This individual said that curriculum and assessment tools were needed most.

Family Literacy Resource Network: Those interviewed by phone did not comment to this area because the question did not relate to the work they do, although one did say a comprehensive tool kit for family literacy providers would be wonderful.

Online survey results

The online survey provided us with many good suggestions and little consistency. It seems that some respondents are looking for standard and approved tools and some think that current approaches and tools are just fine. The one theme that did appear in the online survey was that instructors and facilitators were looking for guidance in using current tools. They said it would be useful to know which tool would be best to use with different levels of learners.

We also heard in both the questionnaire and survey that adult literacy for those individuals with developmental disabilities needed more attention.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

1. Most of the respondents indicated a preference for a comprehensive Reading Benchmark Tool Kit. Others said that certain elements of such a tool kit were more important than others; these individuals seemed to emphasize the need for standardized curricula and/or learner progress assessment. Based on this information, the following recommendations are provided for consideration:
 - a. A comprehensive tool kit containing all three elements of curriculum, resources and assessment should continue to be developed.
 - b. Resources most in use (e.g. *DALA*, *CARA*, the *Oxford Picture Dictionary*) should be benchmarked against the new guidelines contained in the Reading Benchmarks Tool Kit.
 - c. Standardized assessment that will assist facilitators in assessing learner progress should also be developed.
 - d. Ongoing and regular training for facilitators should accompany the implementation of The Benchmarks Tool Kit to ensure all elements of curriculum, resources and especially assessment are effectively used.
2. While the study itself did not ask about the structural effectiveness of the current Adult Literacy and Learning System, it seems appropriate to consider a structural review of its service-delivery continuum. Through the study, it was discovered that two CCIs were reconsidering their role in the delivery non-credit learning and two did not or could not participate in the study because they do not deliver non-credit adult literacy programming. Family literacy programs were unable to participate in the study because their literacy emphasis was through children in the family. Community adult learning programs were not able to participate fully as only a few of their programs delivered adult literacy programs. Therefore it seems appropriate to recommend a structural review of the Adult Literacy and Learning System both for internal and external stakeholders. This recommendation echoes the Living Literacy framework priority action 1.4 for Goal 1 **Increase Literacy**. The action states “*Coordinate adult literacy policies, programs and services beginning with: Alignment of literacy programming between community adult learning providers and CCI’s* “. ¹Internally, this review would assist service providers in understanding their roles and responsibilities and how to effectively bridge to other parts of the adult literacy and learning system. Perhaps even more importantly, externally this clarity would provide learners with a better understanding of where to find services appropriate to their learning and literacy need.

¹ Living literacy: a literacy framework for Alberta’s next generation economy, Goal 1 – point 1.4,pv, <http://aet.alberta.ca/community.aspx>, ISBN 978-0-7785-8567-1, 2009

RESOURCE BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following resources and publishers were useful to the respondents in our study. All URLs were confirmed in May 2011.

All in One Straight Forward English Series

<http://www.tomfolio.com/bookdetailssu.asp?b=2613&m=737>

Alberta Education Reading Assessment

<http://education.alberta.ca/apps/Readtolive/Tools/Reading%20Comprehension%20I.pdf>

Aztec Learning System (online)

http://www.aztecsoftware.com/_aztec/

Bader Reading and Language Inventory

<http://lincs.ed.gov/readingprofiles/Bader.htm>

Being Canadian

<http://library.nald.ca/item/8338>

Canadian Language Benchmarks

<http://www.clb-osa-ca>

Canada's Food Guide

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>

Canadian Adult Reading Assessment

<http://www.grassrootsbooks.net/ca/>

Challenger

<http://www.challenger.cn.com>

Diagnostic Adult Literacy Assessment

<http://www.grassrootsbooks.net/ca/>

Dreamstime

<http://www.dreamstime.com/>

Early Learning Progress Profile

[https://docs.alsde.edu/documents/65/Early%20Learning%20Progress%20Profile%20\(ELPP\).pdf](https://docs.alsde.edu/documents/65/Early%20Learning%20Progress%20Profile%20(ELPP).pdf)

Easy True Stories

<http://www.langacademy.net/vb/showthread.php?12384-Very-Easy-True-Stories-A-Picture-Based-First-Reader>

English Language Learning Instruction System (ELLIS)

<http://www.learndirect.co.uk/browse/mathsenGLISH/english/SpeakingEnglish/ellis-speaking-english/>

ESL Resource Package for Alberta Communities from NorQuest College

<http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/englishexpress/pdf/LiteracyandEssentialSkillsOnlineResourcesExtendedVersion.pdf>

ESL Literacy Placement

http://www.language.ca/display_page.asp?page_id=421

First Nations Press

<http://www.lights.ca/sifc/fnfree.htm>

GED Preparation book

<http://www.gedonline.org/>

Goodman's Five Star Stories

<http://www.glencoe.com/gln/jamestown/goodman.html>

Grass Roots Press

<http://grassrootsbooks.net/ca/>

Groundwork for Building Vocabulary

<http://www.townsendpress.com/product/22.aspx>

Laubach

<http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/literacy/implementationliteracyprogram/TheLaubachLiteracyInternational.htm>

Litstart

<http://www.newreaderspress.com/Items.aspx?hierId=4210>

Looking for Work from Bow Valley College

www.towes.ca

NAS software

<http://www.nas.ca/home.html> (includes Tense Buster, ESL and Literacy, Adult Education)

New Reader Press (Stories Plus)

<http://www.newreaderspress.com/Items.aspx?hierId=4210>

On Target

www.towes.ca

Oxford Picture Dictionary

<http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/general/series/TheOxfordPictureDictionaryProgra/?view=usa>

Passage Ways Anthology

<http://www.curriculumassociates.com/professiona-development/ca101/downloads/miles4.pdf>

Remedia publications (Mary Tarasoff)

<http://www.rempub.com/>

Schonell Spelling Test

<http://www.thrass.co.uk/downloads/Schonell%20Spelling%20Test%20B%20and%20Procedure.pdf>

Scholars Choice

<http://www.scholarschoice.ca/>

Side by Side

<http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/marketing/sidebyside/>

Sing Song Read and Write

<http://www.christianbook.com/sing-spell-read-write-level-1/9781567048070/pd/6304P>

Step Forward Canada

<http://www.oupcanada.com/esl/k-12/newcanadian/sfc.html>

Test of Adult Basic Education

<http://www.sabes.org/assessment/tabe.htm>

Totally True

http://elt.oup.com/catalogue/items/global/skills/totally_true/?cc=global&selLanguage=en

Vocabulary Basics (Nadelle)

<http://www.townsendpress.com/product/24.aspx>

Voyager

http://www.voyagerlearning.com/ResearchStudyDocuments/WashDC_CleOH_Westat_Yr1.pdf

Wintergreen

<http://earlyliteracyconnection.blogspot.com/2010/10/free-resources-at-wintergreen.html>

APPENDIX A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Note: On behalf of the Reading Benchmarks Consultation Advisory Team, I would like to thank you for taking the time to work with me through this questionnaire. The questions have been designed so that the team can better understand the tools and process that are currently being used in delivering adult literacy programs and also, so that the team might better understand what could be useful to practitioners in implementing the Reading Benchmarks.

The questions should be answered from the perspective of your own organization as a broader online survey will be sent out to individual programs across the province.

Finally, the Advisory Team has determined that an honorarium of one hundred dollars will be provided to each individual who participates in answering the full questionnaire with me.

My thanks in advance and I look forward to our conversation in the near future.

Reading Benchmark Questionnaire for CCIs, VTALPs and CALCs

Demographic Questions

- a. Your Name:
- b. Your Place of Work:
- c. Does your organization deliver adult literacy programs?
- d. If you are a funding organization – do you fund adult literacy programs?
 - i. Would you be able to provide me with the contact information of programs you fund to deliver adult literacy programming?
- e. What percentage (approximately) of the learners you work with are First Nations/Métis, etc.?
- f. What percentage (approximately) of the learners you work with are ESL?
- g. Looking at the Reading Benchmarks document, referring to levels one and two, do your learners fall at the lower or higher levels described?

Interview Questions

- 1) Individuals who work with learners may use curricula or learning guides, may use resources as a curricula or learning guides or may develop individualized learning plans for each learner. The series of questions that make up question one are applicable to those who use a clearly defined curricula or learning guides or develop their own individualized learning plans.
 - a. What, if any, curricula and course guides are used in your programs?
 - b. Do you use individualized learning plans (and is this what you call them)?
 - c. Do these (a or b) specify learning objectives?
 - i. If so what kind of learning objectives?
 - ii. Can you provide an example?

- d. What level and type of learners are appropriate for these curricula and/or guides?
 - e. Are learning activities included?
 - i. If so, please provide an example of a learning activity.
 - f. Do the curricula and/or guides give specific information about what resources to use?
 - i. Example?
 - g. Do the curricula and/or guides provide guidance about how to assess students?
 - h. What do you find most useful in this curricula or guide?
- 2) Often individuals who work with learners find using a series of resources more effective as a learning guide than more formal curricula. If your program uses resources as opposed to a formal learning guide or curricula – OR – if you use resources (e.g. texts, publications, websites, software etc.) in addition to your curricula or learning guides, we are interested in knowing more about these resources.
- a. Please tell me the names of the resources and, as possible, the learners (low, medium or high) for whom these tools are most useful.
 - i. Which of these tools are your favourite and why?
- 3) Question three deals with the kinds of assessment tools or processes that your program uses.
- a. Does your program use an assessment tool or process for learner placement?
 - i. Is the tool or process self-developed or more formalized?
 - b. Does your program use an assessment tool or process for learner progress?
 - i. Is the tool or process self-developed or more formalized?
 - c. What tool(s) is (are) used? – In this question we are interested in understanding which established tool is used or if you have developed a tool yourself. Also if you are using portfolios or PLAR, it would be useful to know this as well.
 - d. When and how are these tools or processes used?
- 4) In implementing the Reading Benchmarks, can you tell us what would be most helpful in the following areas:
- a. Curriculum and/or course guides
 - b. Resources (text, publications, websites, software, etc)
 - c. Assessment tools
 - d. Anything else
- 5) Finally, we would greatly appreciate getting samples of the tools and resources your program uses:
- a. Curricula, course guides
 - b. Resource tools
 - c. Assessment tools
 - d. Individualized learning plan framework

APPENDIX B: THE ONLINE SURVEY

Email Cover Note

The Alberta Reading Benchmarks project is looking at ways to provide assistance for implementing the benchmarks. As a starting point, we are trying to contact as many practitioners and stakeholders as possible to get an understanding of what resources, curricula and assessments are currently used in working with adult literacy learners. We will look at how some of these might tie into the benchmarks and where there might be additional work and resources needed. Please use the Reading Benchmark document which was attached to the cover email to assist you in responding to this short survey.

Please be clear that we are interested in “reading” tools only. We anticipate that the survey will take up to ten minutes to complete.

Please ensure you click DONE either after question 5 (scroll down to the end of the survey) or after the last question. The Cut Off date for responding is April 11th 2011

If you have any questions please contact Pam Crosby at pamilac@shaw.ca. Thanks so much for your participation.

Online Survey

1. Please provide your first and last name:
 2. Who do you work for? Please choose only one program. If you work for more than one program please complete the survey and then come back and do it again for your second program. (Drop down box);
 - a. Community Adult Learning Program Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Program
 - b. Family Literacy Program
 - c. Other , please specify (dialogue box)
 3. Have you been interviewed for this project by Pam Crosby? Yes No
 4. Have you been interviewed for this project by Monica Kreiner? Yes No
 5. Does your organization provide Adult Literacy programming to levels one and two students as described in the Benchmark document provided? Yes No
- IF YOU ANSWERED NO TO QUESTIONS 3 OR 4 OR IF YOU HAVE BEEN INTERVIEWED BY MONICA OR PAM FOR THIS PROJECT – please scroll down to the end of the survey and click Done with our thanks for your participation*
- If you answered YES to Question 5 please move on to the next question and complete the survey.*

6. On average, approximately what percentage of your learners are ESL or First Nation / Métis?
Enter numeric percentage without the % sign. ESL ____ First Nation or Métis ____
7. What, if any curricula or course guide is used in your program? Please check all that apply.
(Drop down box)
- I do not use curricula or course guides
 - Self developed (in house) Learning Guide
 - Canadian language Benchmarks
 - Laubach Work Book Series
 - Rosetta Stone
 - Oxford Picture Dictionary
 - Stories Plus
 - Other Commercial Products
 - Please provide the names of other commercial products (Dialogue box)
8. What is your favorite curricula or course guide? (Dialogue box)
9. Do you use individualized learner outcomes as a guide for program planning? Yes No
- If "YES" can you please provide an example of a learner outcome? (Dialogue box)
10. Please indicate which supporting resources you use in your program. Please check all that apply. (drop down box)
- I do not use any supporting resources
 - Canada's Food Guide with activities
 - Dollars and Sense
 - Goodman's Five Star Stories
 - Guest Speakers
 - Literacy and Parenting Skills
 - Dave's Café
 - Self or in-house developed
 - Other commercial products
 - Please provide the names of other commercial products (Dialogue box)
11. What is your favorite resource (dialogue box)
12. If you use any assessment tools for placement or to measure progress could you tell us a bit more about the tools that you use by checking off all that you use: (Drop down box)
- I do not use any assessment tools
 - DALA
 - CARA
 - CAAT
 - English Resource Package for Alberta Communities
 - Canadian Language Benchmarks
 - Fagan's Monitoring Literacy Performance
 - Other self developed product
 - Other commercial product
 - Please provide the names of other commercial products (Dialogue box)
13. What is your favorite assessment tool? (dialogue box)

14. In implementing the Reading Benchmarks can you tell us what would be most helpful in the following area Curriculum or Course Guide (Dialogue box)
15. In implementing the Reading Benchmarks can you tell us what would be most helpful in the following area Resources e.g. Textbooks, publications, websites, software. Etc. (Dialogue box)
16. In implementing the Reading Benchmarks can you tell us what would be most helpful in the following area Assessment Tools (Dialogue box)
17. In implementing the Reading Benchmarks can you tell us what would be most helpful in the following area Other (Dialogue box)
18. Do you have anything you would like to add regarding your current learning documents or what might be useful, in this regard, in the future? (Dialogue box)

Important please click the "Done" button below.

Thank you for taking time to complete the survey.