

# Alberta Reading Benchmarks Pilot Project

## Evaluation Report

August 30, 2013

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## Evaluation Report

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2009 the Alberta government published *Living Literacy: A Literacy Framework for Alberta's Next Generation Economy* and committed to establishing a benchmark framework for Alberta that would assist learners, practitioners and the government in achieving adult literacy and foundational learning goals. To accomplish the development of reading benchmarks, the Alberta Reading Benchmarks (ARB), a multiphase adult literacy project was established in 2010. The 4 year project, done in full partnership by a group of stakeholders, created a set of comprehensive adult literacy reading benchmarks that are accompanied by key implementation guides and teaching resources. Based on a review of the literature and conversations with the field, the project created seven levels of reading benchmarks for adult literacy, upgrading, and essential skill-building loosely referenced to the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) Levels 1-3. A Pilot Project was carried out between September 2012 and June 2013 to explore and identify effective and meaningful applications of the Reading Benchmarks and accompanying tools. The Pilot Project ran in a variety of programs in six sites, with eleven practitioners using the benchmarks and associated tools and resources in their programs.

The evaluation of the Pilot Project was carried out by external evaluators between December 2012 and August 2013. The focus of the evaluation was to describe the experiences of the practitioners with implementation of the ARB and associated tools. Data was collected through an online survey, individual interviews with practitioners and others involved in the project, guided group conversations and document analysis. Findings are organized around four anticipated outcomes.

***Outcome 1: Practitioners from a variety of programs and contexts implement and develop tools and strategies to test the benchmarks and critically inform revisions to the ARB document and its implementation in a supportive environment***

The evaluation found that the structures and supports offered through the Pilot Project worked well to achieve the goal of trying out the ARB and accompanying tools in different sites. Participants felt they had good orientation and training and that the methods used to support them were effective. In particular, the role played by the Pilot Project Facilitator was regarded as essential in keeping people engaged throughout.

All practitioners involved in the Pilot Project felt supported and worked to find ways to include the benchmarks in their program. Some practitioners were able to implement the tools quite successfully and they could identify the resulting benefits to their learners. This was especially so for those sites that worked through the benchmarks with the learners. There was more success in programs where there was time to assess and implement or when the learner goals fit with the notion of individually assessing their reading levels. In many cases practitioners developed new tools to assist their work on implementation.

The provided tools seem to work better on a 1-1 basis, not in large groups, particularly for those sites that worked through the benchmarks with the learners. However, according to the practitioners, the

assessment tools such as Read Forward require time to administer (approximately 2 hours) and need to be embedded in instruction with groups of learners, otherwise their use is uneconomical.

Practitioners who work in programs with drop-in students, with English Language Learners, in programs with more holistic approaches or those that have a very set curriculum had considerable difficulty implementing the ARB. Learner motivation and regular attendance were also factors that influenced the ability to use the benchmarks. However, all the practitioners found a way to make some aspect of the ARB and the related tools and strategies work for their programs.

The challenges in using the ARB resources reported by practitioners include: they are not organized for best utilization; they have complex language and not enough information or examples of how to use them. Practitioners working with English Language Learners prefer to use the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) as they are organized in a useful format and binder, with all the tools together; they are offered on-line; they are used across the country, and cover more than one area of learning. Family Literacy practitioners said that their focus is on the family as a unit learning together, not on just the adults in the family. They were able to use the ARB to assess the levels of their teaching resources (many of the other programs also used tools in this way).

Despite the limitations in the use of the ARB, 70% (7) of practitioners plan to use them in the future in the instances where their program and students can benefit. Regardless of their success with using the ARB, all practitioners agreed that their main focus is the learner. Their teaching needs to work for the learners and the goals they set for themselves. They structure their activities accordingly. If the ARB and other tools work for the learners they will use them, otherwise they will not.

The high rating received by the individualized supports provided by the Pilot Facilitator raises important issues for province wide implementation of the benchmarks. Pilot participants agreed that in many cases, without the support from the Facilitator they would not have continued to work with the benchmarks and associated resources.

When describing the ARB implementation, two different perspectives coexisted in the Pilot Project. On one hand, some ARB documents, project documents and some key informants use terms such as 'standardization,' 'consistent ways of measuring learner progress,' 'accountability,' 'credibility,' and 'transferability.' On the other hand the same ARB documents, comments from Pilot Project participants and some key informants emphasize the needs of the individual learners and programs, a focus on measures that work for each program and the approaches practitioners use with their learners. For a benchmark to serve as a reference and be useful in providing province-wide data, it needs to be applied in a consistent way across programs. The Pilot Project revealed that the benchmarks can be useful for some programs and for some learners. The information that results from benchmarking some learners will therefore not provide data about all learners participating in Adult Literacy programs in Alberta. The expectation of having standard learning outcomes, curricula and measurement tools may not materialize.

### ***Short term outcome 2: Information on Training Needs, Resources and Other Supports is identified***

The Pilot Project provided different training opportunities and explored the impact of the different approaches. The Facilitator and Trainer were flexible in offering sessions when practitioners asked for specific training. Some practitioners felt that the training content favoured adult literacy programs that work with tutors and have students attend regularly for a long period. Overall, practitioners prefer face-to-face training opportunities but would also like to have information available online in the form of resources or webinars.

The evaluation identified that there was some confusion with the terminology used during the training. ‘Benchmarks,’ ‘assessment tools’ and ‘teaching tools’ were terms interchangeably used by a number of practitioners. In practice this could lead, for example, to benchmarks being used as assessment. Instructors might also teach “to the test” rather than focusing on supporting the learning demonstrated through assessment that can be aligned with the benchmarks.

***Outcome 3: Practitioners, funders, partners and administrators provide oversight in the testing of the ARB***

Several strategies were implemented to ensure practitioners, funders, partners and administrators were engaged in the oversight of the Pilot and its evaluation: regular meetings with the ARB Advisory and Evaluation Committees, on-going communication between the Coordinator, the Pilot Project Facilitator, the Trainer, and the evaluators regarding approaches and activities. For the evaluation, an Evaluation Committee was formed and the data collected (with careful protection of practitioners’ identities) and a first draft of this report were shared to confirm understandings and ensure the report would serve its anticipated uses.

***Outcome 4: Greater awareness of the ARB among Future Stakeholders***

Based on the data collected, over 590 individuals heard about the ARB project from practitioners. Since July 2012 the ARB website has have 2,399 views with 13 pages viewed. The information available is not enough to draw conclusions about the achievement of this outcome.

**Recommendations**

*Generally*

1. Consider the development of other benchmarks (writing, listening, and speaking) and related resources.
2. Consider delaying full province-wide implementation until the full package of adult literacy benchmarks and resources are ready. Alternately, phase in ARB implementation.

*For the ARB and related resources*

1. Re-write the ARB in plain language to make them more accessible to learners.
2. Clarify terminology to ensure more uniformity in the use of the terms when describing implementation strategies and reporting on learner progress.
3. Explore the potential for developing a more coherent and bulleted document that shows clearly how one skill leads to the next, provides examples, and helps learners plan their learning.
4. Provide an integrated and complete package of resources for practitioners that is user-friendly, clear, useful and accessible.

*For ARB implementation*

1. Clearly state the ARB Advisory Committee’s expectations about implementation: mandatory implementation vs. optional implementation and the time frame for this.
2. Encourage participation of the adult literacy programs that are most likely to be able to implement the ARB for the launch of province-wide implementation. Characteristics of these are:

groups of learners in regularly scheduled classes over a period of time where it is possible to imbed assessment in the program.

3. Provide a support structure for implementation that includes orientation, training, resources as identified in the other recommendations and that can include: a variety of training methods, a process for implementation that is clear with step-by-step instructions and comprehensive and user-friendly resources, on-line interactive or telephone support, and regional networks of support.
4. To increase the profile of the Benchmarks for the general population, literacy field and government, publish the results of the Pilot Project, make presentations at professional gatherings, and consider press releases and public print and on-line articles.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2009 the Alberta government published *Living Literacy: A Literacy Framework for Alberta's Next Generation Economy*. It committed to establishing a benchmark framework for Alberta that would assist learners, practitioners and the government in achieving adult literacy and foundational learning goals. These foundational skills and abilities impact a person's capacity to deal effectively with the personal, social, academic and employment-related facets of life that will enable them to thrive and contribute to the Alberta Next Generation Economy. To accomplish these goals the Alberta Reading Benchmarks (ARB), a multiphase adult literacy project, was established in 2010. The project, done in full partnership by a group of stakeholders,<sup>1</sup> created a set of comprehensive adult literacy reading benchmarks that are accompanied by key implementation guides and teaching resources. Based on a review of the literature and conversations with the field, the project created seven levels of reading benchmarks for adult literacy, upgrading, and essential skill-building loosely referenced to the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) Levels 1-3.

The ARB 4-year project, slated to conclude in 2014 underwent changes in coordination in the first years but it maintained its commitment to a consultative approach through the oversight of an Advisory Committee. To ensure that the benchmarks would be useful to the field a Pilot Project was planned. The main purpose of the Pilot Project was to inform the development of training tools and resources that would support the implementation of the ARB. There were other initiatives that took place at the same time as the Pilot Project such as research and consultation on the range of teaching and learning resources and assessment tools that programs use to strengthen adult literacy. For more information on the ARB visit the website:

<http://albertareadingbenchmarks.wordpress.com/>

The Pilot Project was carried out between September 2012 and June 2013 to explore and identify effective and meaningful applications of the Reading Benchmarks and accompanying tools in a variety of programs (Appendix A presents Terms of Reference and a detailed timeline of the Pilot Project). Eleven practitioners participated using the benchmarks and associated tools and resources in their programs (Appendix B includes a list of all Pilot sites and their location in the province). The learnings from the ARB Pilot Project are expected to contribute to adult literacy knowledge and future project development.

In December 2012 Joy Page and Marina Niks were engaged to evaluate the Pilot Project. This report details the approach and findings of the evaluation and provides recommendations based on them. For a fuller understanding of the entire project readers are encouraged to read *Reflections on the ARB Pilot 2012-2013* by Corrie Rhyasen Erdman as well as the Interim and Final Site Reports produced by the Pilot Project Practitioners.

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<sup>1</sup> Advisory Committee Members represent the following stakeholders: Government of Alberta, Literacy Alberta, Centre for Family Literacy, Community Learning Network, Bow Valley College and Northern Lakes College.



## METHODS

Advisory Committee members agreed that the evaluation of the Pilot Project would concentrate on exploring the perspective of the practitioners on the ARB implementation. The Advisory Committee was most interested in learning if and how the benchmarks were useful in the different programs.

Based on the **Outcomes Based Measurement Framework** developed for the Pilot Project (found in Appendix C) data was collected between April 1 and June 24 2013 using a variety of methods: **survey, interviews, group guided conversations and reflections and document analysis.**

**All Pilot site practitioners** were sent invitations to participate. These letters described the evaluation process and the different ways in which participants could provide their comments (the letter of invitation is in Appendix D).

- An **on-line survey** asked questions regarding: program background, participant's work in Adult Literacy, support provided by the Pilot Project, training, tools and strategies and the ARB. Although most of the questions included Likert scale-type responses, all had options for including qualitative responses. Appendix E includes a copy of the survey questions.
- All practitioners involved in the Pilot Project were invited to schedule a time for an **individual interview**. The Pilot Project Facilitator and the Trainer were also interviewed. Individual interviews were taped. Summaries of each of the interviews were prepared and validated with the participants. Interview questions are included in Appendix F.
- In an effort to reduce participant fatigue, the evaluators worked with the Pilot Project Facilitator and Trainer to plan and jointly lead a final meeting of all practitioners that served both as a **group guided conversation (focus group)** for the evaluation and a closing activity for the Pilot. Appendix G includes an agenda for this June 14 meeting.
- Throughout the evaluation the consultants were in touch with the Pilot Facilitator regarding the progress of the Pilot Project. She made **Pilot Project documents** available to the evaluators: the Pilot Sites Profiles, Pilot Site Interim and Final Reports and Training Resources. For a full list of documents the consultants reviewed see Appendix H.

### Data was collected from:

- ✓ **Practitioners participating in the Pilot Project**
  - 100% (11) completed the survey
  - 91% (10 ) participating practitioners were interviewed
  - 82% (9) attended the final meeting in Edmonton. One of these attended part of the meeting by Skype
- ✓ **ARB Personnel**
  - Project Manager, Pilot Project Facilitator and Trainer were interviewed
- ✓ **Project Documents and Reports**

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and a constant comparison approach and organized using the agreed upon short term outcomes and indicators. Preliminary analyses were shared with the Evaluation Committee in July 2013.

## FINDINGS

Findings are organized around the four Short Term Outcomes specified in the Logic Model. For each outcome we present a statement that summarizes the specific findings. We then elaborate with a brief description of the quantitative data. To describe the experiences and opinions of the participants we provide excerpts from the Site Reports and the Surveys. Additional supporting data is included in the Appendices.

### **Short Term Outcome 1: Practitioners from a variety of programs and contexts implement and develop tools and strategies to test the benchmarks and critically inform revisions to the ARB document and its implementation in a supportive environment**

**The evaluation found that the structures and supports offered through the Pilot Project worked well to achieve the goal of trying out the ARB and accompanying tools in different sites.**

Participants felt they had good orientation and training and that the methods used to support them were effective. In particular, the role played by the Facilitator, Corrie Rhyasen Erdman, was described as crucial in keeping people on track and engaged throughout.

The main goal of the Pilot Project was to explore how the ARB worked in the programs. Are the ARB useful to practitioners in the different programs and contexts? Are the ARB helpful in assessing and conveying learner progress? How do the available teaching and learning tools apply to the classroom? How do they link to assessment tools? What tools have been or need to be developed? The first outcome relates to those questions. To make sure all aspects of the outcome are explored, we organize the findings around each part of the outcome.

### **Practitioners from a Variety of Programs and Contexts**

#### **Profile of Pilot programs**

- 73% (8) Alberta Government funded
- 82% (9) Located in small population centres
- Population served by programs
  - 45% (5) Aboriginal
  - 36% (4) Adult Literacy learners
  - 36% (4) ESL Literacy
  - 27% (3) ESL Learners
  - 18% (18) Upgrading learners
- Programs had multiple foci for their teaching:
  - 45% (5) ABE/GED/HS Upgrading
  - 36% (4) Adult Literacy
  - 36% (4) ESL
  - 27% Family Literacy

#### **The Pilot Sites**

To explore the uses of the ARB and associated tools in the variety of programs existing in the province, it was important to ensure a variety of Pilot sites. The selection process for sites and programs to test the ARB has not been recorded. Advisory Committee members and practitioners report they used a semi-formal process where they brainstormed different options for selection of sites with a goal of representing the diversity of adult literacy programming in Alberta. They were then tasked with consulting with others in the field and making recommendations to the committee on potential sites. They then recruited sites to take part, dependent on their area of practice.

Given the range of programming available in Alberta,<sup>2</sup> the **Pilot sites include the diversity of Adult Literacy instruction in the province.** This was corroborated by the Advisory and Evaluation Committees and the Pilot Project participants. Some practitioners said they would have liked to see more community organizations trying out the benchmarks, while others thought more private groups should have been represented. Overall, participants felt the sites gave a good description of what the implementation would look like in the field. It is important to note that while Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Services (VTALS) programs are the majority of programs offering Adult Literacy programming in Alberta, they were a minority in the selected Pilot Project sites. The findings of the Pilot Project evaluation speak to the sites that had already been selected and engaged in the ARB testing and not to the current landscape of Adult Literacy programming in the province.

There were some challenges with the fit of the selected programs and the ARB focus on adult literacy. Several sites originally chosen for their delivery method or the type of learner served, experienced a subsequent change in focus for the program, resulting in more programs with an ESL focus or drop-in delivery method testing the benchmarks and tools than anticipated. Also, one of the Pilot sites offered high school upgrading with a set provincial curriculum. There was a mismatch between the ARB Pilot Project and this curriculum. The Read Forward assessment revealed that many of the learners were functioning at a level between 2 and 3. This explained the low success rate in GED completion, but left the instructors in the difficult place of needing to provide literacy instruction while also needing to teach the provincial curriculum at a high level.

## The Practitioners

The Pilot Project was run to better understand the training needs and other supports practitioners in Alberta will require to implement the ARB. The participating practitioners were committed to their learners and to the project, well trained and, unlike much of the Adult Literacy workforce, have a relative stable employment situation. Although the Terms of Reference for the Pilot Project indicated a requirement of 2 years' experience in Adult Literacy, not all practitioners involved reported having worked in the field for 2 years. In fact, two practitioners were new to the field.

### Profile of Practitioners in Pilot Project

- Roles
  - 55% (6) instructor
  - 36% (4) facilitator
  - 27% (3) other role (LES Coach, Program Director)
- Employment
  - 91% (10) were employed full time
  - 36% (4) were permanent employees
  - Majority (9) in their current position for 8 years or less
- Training
  - 45% (5) no training specific to Adult Literacy
  - 36% (4) university degree related to Adult Literacy
  - 27% (3) B.Ed. or certificate in Family Literacy
  - 9% (1) College level diploma or certificate in Adult Literacy

<sup>2</sup> A review of the Alberta government website reveals that there are 81 Community Adult Learning Councils which provide part-time adult literacy classes and part-time English language learning classes, 70 Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Programs which match adult learners with a volunteer tutor to assist with improving reading, writing and numeracy skills, and 44 family literacy programs for parents and their preschool children. Literacy programs are available at post-secondary institutions English language learning programs are also available at 21 public post-secondary institutions, 5 independent post-secondary institutions, immigrant serving organizations and other training providers.

It is unlikely that in terms of training<sup>3</sup> and employment situation, the practitioners in the Pilot Project represent the majority of practitioners who provide the bulk of Adult Literacy instruction in the province. For example, the employment situation of the participating practitioners is not typical of the field where instructors work part time, for short periods and are earning minimum wage. **This presents a challenge to drawing conclusions for planning province-wide implementation.**

### **Implementation and Development of Tools and Strategies to Test the Benchmarks and Provide Critical Feedback to Inform Revisions to the ARB Document and Its Implementation**

Practitioners were asked to implement the ARB in their programs. They were also given some tools to facilitate the implementation of the ARB and were encouraged to create new resources and share them with the other sites.

Some practitioners were able to implement the tools quite successfully and they could identify the resulting benefits to their learners. This was especially so for those sites that worked through the benchmarks **with the learners.**

*The way the benchmarks empowered learners would be the first plus. It speaks to best practices in the classroom of using assessment in proactive and collaborative ways, where learners become partners in their goal setting and learning. It gives them a sense of purpose with their studies. It allowed students to understand reading as a progression, and increased their motivation in moving towards the next level. The key factors in fitting it into the program were the correlation between Read Forward as a placement tool, and ARB as a measurement. They complemented each other very well. Also, in determining*

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<sup>3</sup> The categories offered in the survey for practitioners to share their training focused on institutionalized educational experiences. Respondents had the option to add other training. Anticipating that practitioners would also have other types of training, an open ended question asked them to list 'Additional Training.' To that, 8 practitioners responded with: New Coordinator Training with Alberta Literacy, B.Ed., Family literacy training modules, Masters of Education, TESOL, K-12 and Adult Education, workshops, Masters of Theology degree, ESL certificate, Workplace Essential Skills training.

The benchmarks worked well in the program because the program is fluid so it is easy for learners to move in and out of the class. The program was broken down into four parts reading, writing, speaking and listening. This aligns very well with the ARBs and also with the CLBs. I feel it is very important that the learners know in what areas they are being taught and for what reasons. The benchmarks have given me the ability to name strategies for their learning purposes. The learners are very responsive to the implementation of the benchmarks. I discussed the reasons why we are doing this and the benefits to them in the short and long term. The learners were key in the implementation of the benchmarks and their input is valued very much. I believe that because it is their learning journey they should be involved in how and what they learn to meet their goals. (Participating practitioner)

I develop most of the resources I give to the students in my classroom. When developing these resources, I always looked to the ARBs, and attempted to use them in as much of my curriculum as possible. The program uses both outcomes and themes. Within each theme, I would consider what my students needs were. For example, within the theme of Health and Safety, I knew my students could use work on reading medicine labels. I gathered a selection of medicines from home, created questions around the labels, and had the students answer these questions. The students (level 2a) were able to answer questions specific to each medicine bottle, but were also able to answer questions, such as "which medicine would be best for a cold or a headache?" (Participating practitioner)

The process that all sites used that worked very well was the use of Read Forward as a placement and ongoing assessment tool. It works well because of the way results are presented, as well as the tasks and skills it assesses. It is accessible to learners at all levels. It fits nicely into our program as there is no standard assessment tool used after a student is placed in an English language arts course. This allowed for conversation about students, resources and progress to become standardized and easily referenced.

The use of ARB also guided instructional strategies and resources. It was a roadmap that allowed for more accurate targeting of specific skills and literacy levels. In a way, it empowered the instructor as well, for with an assessment-based focus comes a confidence that students are being given the right level of resources. (Participating practitioner)

**Other practitioners had considerable difficulty implementing the ARB because of the nature of their programs.** The benchmarks were harder to use for programs with drop-in students, a more holistic approach or those that have a very set curriculum. Learner motivation and regular attendance were also factors that influenced the ability to use the benchmarks.

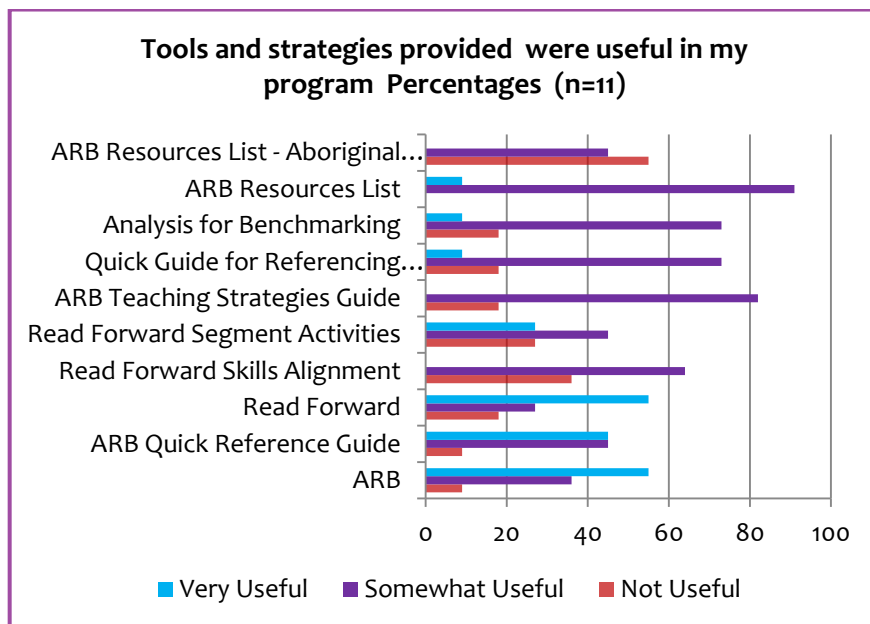
*My program used a model, where students identified their literacy goals rather than having a set program or curriculum to follow. I worked with students in areas that were of interest to them. Therefore it was more difficult to use the benchmarks as a basis for instruction. Time for literacy classes was a factor, literacy classes were a component for a much larger program. The goal was to provide tutorials if students felt they needed it and to help direct students to alternative methods of occupying their time when they are in the workforce. (Participating practitioner)*

**However, all the practitioners found a way to make some aspect of the ARB and the related tools and strategies work for their programs.**

The **frequency of use** of the tools varied. The tools that were reported to have been used most were

- ✓ Alberta Reading Benchmarks
- ✓ ARB Quick Reference Guide
- ✓ Read Forward

The rest of the resources were used 50% of the time or less. The table describes the usefulness rating of the tools by the practitioners.



The **tools seem to work better on a 1-1 basis**, not in large groups. Many of the practitioners were unable to use the tools with classes of learners and had to use them individually. Each assessment takes about 2 hours of practitioner time; they need to invest time and energy on this even though their time with the learners is quite limited. According to the practitioners, the assessment tools (such as Read Forward) need to be embedded in instruction with groups of learners, otherwise their use is uneconomical.

The practitioners reported that the ARB Pilot resources were **not organized for best utilization** – there were too many tools and resources, it was not clear how they work together and there was

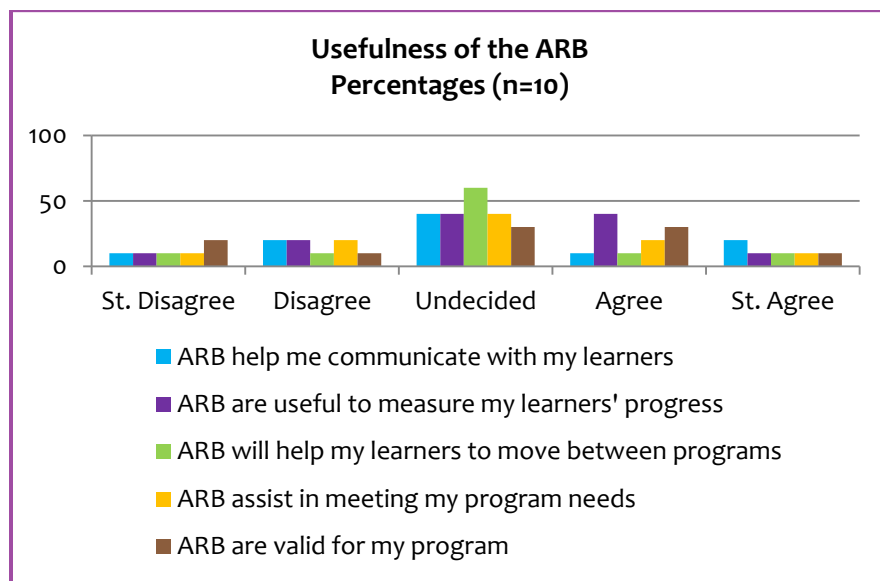


not enough information or examples of how to use them. If the plan is to put these on-line to train others, the package of tools and resources needs to be reorganized to make it user friendly.

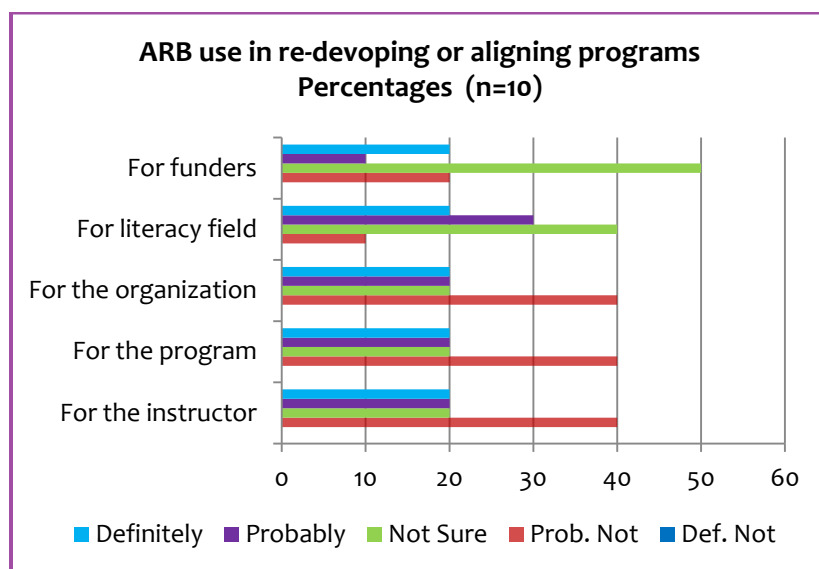
Most practitioners working with **English Language Learners** prefer to use the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and prefer to **not** use the ARB. The CLBs are organized in a useful format and binder, with all the tools together; they are offered on-line; they are used across the country, and cover more than one area of learning.

*The ARB did not work as they were intended and designed, for this program. All of my learners are learning English as an additional language. As English language learners, we focus on all four strands of language: reading, writing, speaking and listening. The ARBs only focus on reading and don't really match the needs of my learners. The Canadian Language Benchmarks were designed for ELLs and are much more useful to me. As an established benchmark, the CLBs also have a variety of existing resources that meet the needs of my learners and my own needs as an instructor. (Participating practitioner)*

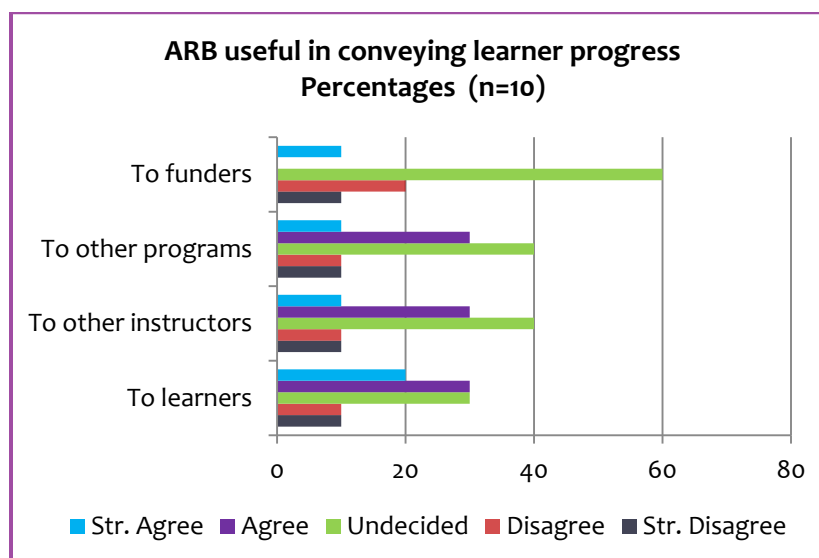
One of the expectations of the Pilot Project was that practitioners would develop tools and strategies they would use to augment the tools that were provided and that they might share these with the other Pilot sites for their use. **Many sites did develop tools and strategies such as documents to align the benchmarks with their curriculum and learning materials.** For the most part these were not shared among the sites.



Based on the data collected, it is evident that participating practitioners had the opportunities and were willing to provide critical feedback to inform changes to the resources. The table highlights the practitioners' overall thoughts about the **usefulness of the ARB** for their program, to communicate with their learners, to measure learners' progress, to facilitate move between programs and for meeting program needs. **Most of the responses fall on the 'undecided' category.**



A further postulated use of the ARB is that they would be **useful in re-designing or aligning curriculum**. Practitioners were mixed in their judgment of this with 40-50% undecided in the different categories and as many (20%) disagreeing as agreeing. The only exception is in a slightly higher percentage of practitioners (30%) believing that the ARB can be useful in aligning programs for the literacy field.



One of the expectations of the ARB was to provide a consistent measure of student progress. Practitioners were asked to rate the **utility of the ARB in conveying learner progress**. Again, between 30-60% of responses fall on the 'undecided' category. Half of the practitioners believe the ARB can be useful in conveying information on learner progress to learners (50%), other instructors (40%) and other programs (40%). Only 10% believe the information can be useful to funders.

In interviews, reports and in the final meeting, most practitioners reported that **the ARB focus on Reading alone is too narrow a scope**. Reading is not learned or taught in isolation and the focus is problematic when practitioners teach all language literacy components of reading, writing, speaking and listening. They would prefer to at least have Writing Benchmarks and the related tools to go along with the ARB.

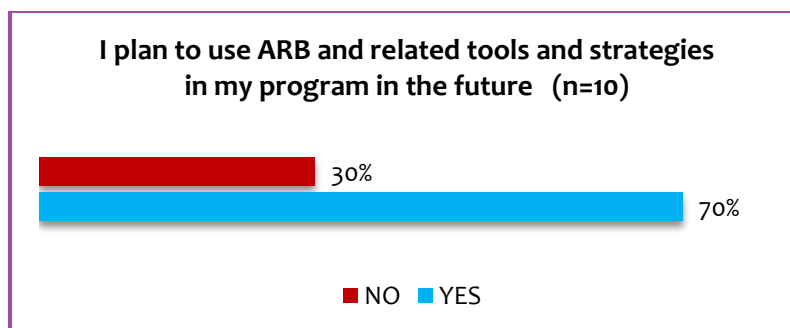


One of the things that did not work well was that the benchmarks were very narrow in scope. Reading does not happen in an isolated situation there are many other facts that happen when you read. The benchmarks did not always cover all material. There was no connection between the benchmarks and that task. Or putting stories into sequence was another task that was hard to determine where it landed in the benchmarks and how to deal with this task. I found that I teach my learners to read for understanding. The benchmarks assume that all people understand what they are reading. I have learners that can read but do not understand. The benchmarks do not take this into account. (Participating practitioner)

A further **limitation in the applicability of the ARBs was in Family Literacy**. Family Literacy practitioners said that their focus is on the family as a unit learning together, not on just the adults in the family. They were able to use the ARB to assess the levels of their teaching resources (many of the other programs also used tools in this way). They worked very hard to test the applicability of the ARB and related tools and strategies to their program, describing the process for Family Literacy programs as “fitting a square peg into a round hole.”

*As family literacy practitioners, we feel the benchmarks can assist us in determining if resources we use in our programs are inclusive and are accessible to people who have literacy challenges. We are more hesitant to use the benchmarks as a tool to place our families in the levels as they are laid out. Our families come to programs for many different reasons and due to many different challenges or barriers they are experiencing. Often they are not confident in their own skills of supporting their children’s literacy and their goal is to be able to help their children. Although this can be a step toward their own learning goals, it may not be their focus right away. Staying true to the theory of family literacy, we follow the family’s lead and feel that any assessment of a parent’s reading skills is best done if requested by the parent, when it is requested by them. (Participating practitioner)*

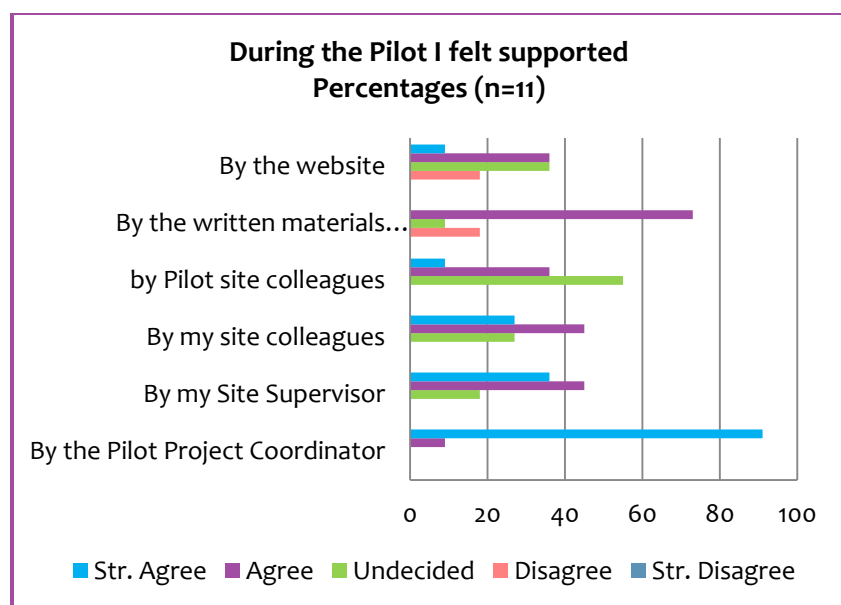
Despite the limitations in the use of the ARB, the majority of practitioners plan to use them in the future in the instances where their program and students can benefit.



**Most practitioners already have at their disposal a wide range of other tools to use. They saw that the ARB and the tools became one more set of resources in their ‘tool-kit’ that they can use if they fit with the learners and their goals.**

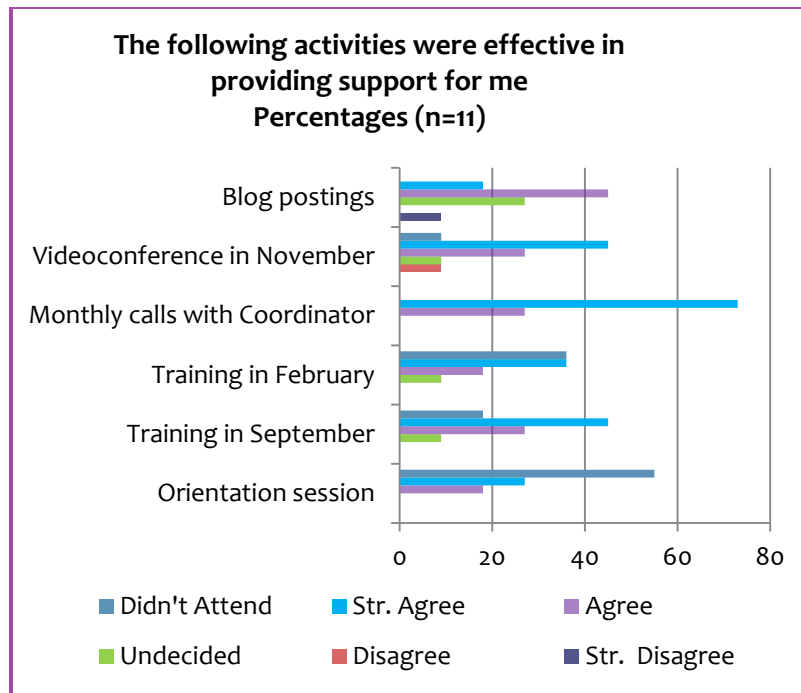
## The Pilot Project Provided a Supportive Environment

The Pilot Project provided a variety of supports to Pilot sites: resources and tools shared with practitioners, a series of training opportunities, information posted on the website, monthly telephone calls with the Project Facilitator and a blog to exchange information with the other participating practitioners. It was also anticipated that practitioners would rely on their own supports. An examination of the supports provided by the Pilot Project and their impact on the practitioners was an important focus of the evaluation. To ensure practitioners were able to provide critical feedback, they needed to feel that their experiences and opinions were important and not feel threatened. The effectiveness of the supports would also provide information about what was needed and when to support province wide implementation of the ARB.



While the trainings offered and other activities received good ratings, the one rated **the most effective strategy for support was the contact with the Facilitator through monthly calls.**

The high rating received by the individualized supports provided by the Pilot Facilitator raises important issues for province wide implementation of the benchmarks. Pilot participants agreed that in many cases, **without the support from the Facilitator they would not have continued to work with the benchmarks and associated resources.** “Corrie found us even when we didn’t want to be found,” one participant stated. Planning for wider implementation in the future will need to consider if and how support can be provided.



Practitioners felt supported throughout the project.

- ✓ 100% reported that they felt supported by the Pilot Facilitator
- ✓ 82% reported they felt supported by the materials provided

## Different Expectations for the ARB Implementation

When describing the ARB implementation, two different perspectives, not necessarily complementary, coexisted in the Pilot Project. On one hand, some ARB documents, project documents and some key informants use terms such as ‘standardization,’ ‘consistent ways of measuring learner progress,’ ‘accountability,’ ‘credibility,’ and ‘transferability.’ On the other hand the same ARB documents, comments from Pilot Project participants and some key informants emphasize the needs of the individual learners and programs, a focus on measures that work for each program and the approaches practitioners use with their learners. This range of perspectives in the use of the term confused some of the conversations about implementation during the Pilot Project. While individuals thought they were agreeing to province wide implementation of the ARB, they were actually referring to different processes. As this is a critical concept in the ARB project, we explore the conflict as it played out in the Pilot Project evaluation data to inform further conversations.

All ARB Advisory Committee members linked the ARB and the Pilot Project to the *Living Literacy: A Literacy Framework for Alberta’s Next Generation Economy*. This document sets out goals that speak to standardization. The ARB are expected to be one standard measure of learners’ skills that can provide province wide data about the adult literacy system.<sup>4</sup>

**Goal 1** – More Albertans have a minimum of level 3 on international adult literacy measures.

**Priority Actions:**

1.1 Work with adult literacy providers to develop and implement an articulated adult literacy system referenced to international adult literacy and essential skills measures. This includes:

- Standard learning outcomes and benchmarks.
- Standard tools to assess learning and skill acquisition.
- Articulated literacy curriculum.

<http://eae.alberta.ca/media/219400/living%20literacy.pdf>

Similar language was used by several Advisory Committee members to describe why the ARB are needed and what was expected of the Pilot Project.

*We need to have some way to figure whether the programs we have are working or not. We need a whole system of learner progression measurement. This would be one piece of what we could use. Until now we haven’t done a good job of measuring learner progression and this will be part of creating a coordinated system that comes out of the Living Literacy Framework.*  
(Advisory Committee member)

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<sup>4</sup> The alignment of the ARB to international Adult Literacy and Essential Skills measures such as IALS was not explored during the evaluation but it was acknowledged to present challenges. IALS is a survey that uses psychometric measures based on intelligence tests to assess reading skills. The benchmarks are standards that describe the different steps in, this case, the reading learning process.

*We are looking for measures around our programming. The Premier wants to accelerate the results based budgeting process. That process implies measuring all of our programs and services. We need to make sure all of the measures we have, and recommendations therein, will be the best.*  
(Advisory Committee member)

*The ARB was developed to be part of a systematic measure of literacy and literacy learning. Provincial standardization will increase transferability, accountability and credibility. Alberta is behind other provinces in standardization of literacy practices and expectations. This is a good first step toward that.* (Advisory Committee member)

These comments speak of a vision of a coordinated adult literacy system, where learners are assessed using the same set of tools across programs, attend programs that have standard learning outcomes and curriculum, and are able to move from one program to another in the province as they progress in the development of their skills. Information about their progress could be used for accountability purposes and would also serve to lend credibility to the programs, to practitioners and to the field as a whole.

When Pilot Project participating practitioners and some key informants describe their vision of the ARB in the adult literacy field, they place the emphasis somewhere else. They focus on learner needs and the learning context. Rather than focusing on province wide articulation and standard curriculum and measures, they highlight the need to do what works best for the learner and the practitioner in their practice. Practitioners and the Pilot Facilitator and the Trainer used the term ‘implementation’ to describe optional adoption, making the benchmarks and related resources available, providing supportive training opportunities, and communicating the benefits of using the benchmarks to the field.

*Implementation would have to allow for the ARB to be used in some settings and not in others - maybe use should be voluntary? The government is looking to the ARB as an accountability measure. Using this measure as a form of accountability along with other indicators of learning such as level of confidence, risk-taking, and level of engagement in learning would be more reflective of learner growth. With adult literacy learners there is so much more that contributes to their capacity for learning that cannot be solely measured by the benchmarks. A further fear is programs receiving less funding – e.g. when the government sees a learner moves forward to another level they may no longer fund or provide instruction to fill in the learning gaps that exist at the lower level.* (Key Informant Interviewee)

*Implementation is getting everyone -funders, community, etc.- aware of (the ARB) and able to use it. Implementation will be on-going – on-going training and support. It should give a common language to communicate with learners and others, identify the levels and help in the development of appropriate t/l resources. Because many of the programs are small and use a lot of volunteer tutors, it will be difficult to implement quickly and the training will have to be available on a recurring basis. (Key Informant Interviewee)*

The ARB document attempts to connect the two visions but the tension is still present and not fully explained: The ARB can be used as one measure of accountability for programs, but not the only measure.

*First of all, the Alberta Reading Benchmarks represent only one measure of the variety of competencies that adults possess and that literacy and foundational learning programs assist their learners to develop. This should always be taken into account when using the Benchmarks. Secondly, it is recommended that learner progress as determined by these benchmarks not be the primary accountability or performance measure of program quality. An increase in reading skills is only one measure of learner progress in literacy programs and learner progress is only one possible component of program accountability. Too much weighting on learner progress as an accountability measure will not give sufficient weight to all the other measures that support such progress – whether programmatically or from the learners’ perspective – and make a program successful. (Alberta Reading Benchmarks)*

For a benchmark to serve as a reference and be useful in providing province-wide data, it needs to be applied in a consistent way across programs. The Pilot Project revealed that the benchmarks can be useful for some programs, for some learners. The information that results from benchmarking some learners will therefore not provide data about all learners participating in Adult Literacy programs in Alberta. The expectation of having standard learning outcomes, curricula and measurement tools may not materialize.

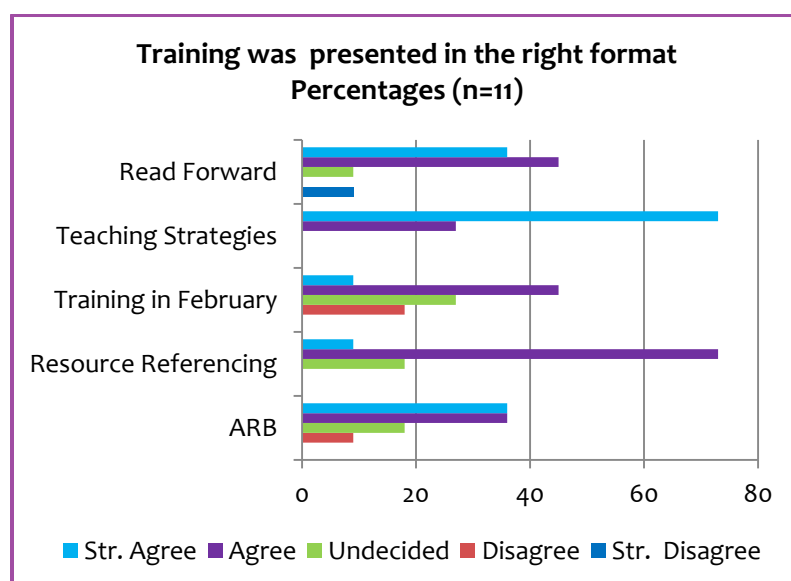
Based on the data collected from practitioners and conversations with the Evaluation Committee (whose members are on the ARB Advisory Committee) towards the end of the project, it became clear that there is no intention to require the use of the ARB for all programs. Instead, the ARB will be presented as a useful tool to be used by those programs and practitioners who can benefit from them. It would be useful to address how this individualized use will contribute to the stated goals of the *Living Literacy: A Literacy Framework for Alberta’s Next Generation Economy*.

## Short Term Outcome 2: Information on Training Needs, Resources and Other Supports is identified

The Pilot Project provided different training opportunities and explored the impact of the different approaches. The Facilitator and Trainer were flexible in offering sessions when practitioners asked for specific training. Some practitioners felt that the training content favoured adult literacy programs that work with tutors and have students attend regularly for a long period. Overall, practitioners prefer face-to-face training opportunities but would also like to have information available online in the form of resources or webinars.

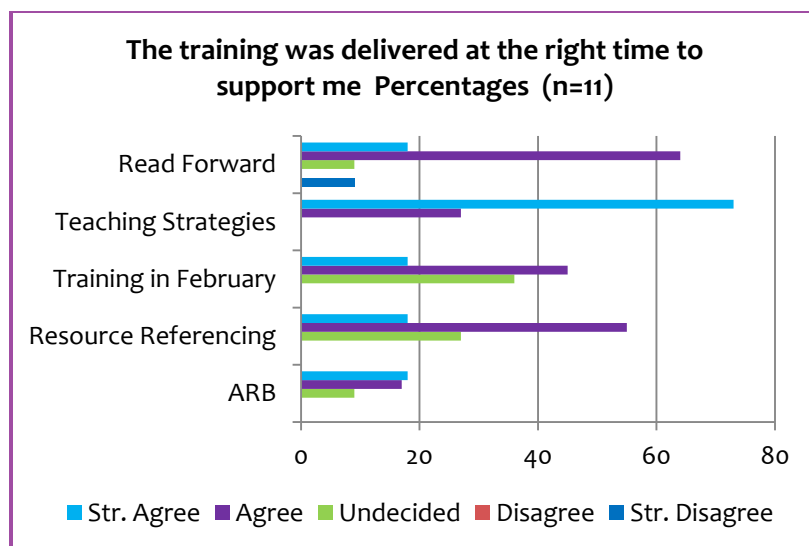
The data collected through the survey offers insights into the different aspects of the training offered. The data shows practitioners felt the training

- ✓ Was delivered at the right time to support practitioners
- ✓ Was presented in the right format



*I suggested further training on benchmarking resources to Corrie, and she arranged a video conference with Lorene Anderson.*  
(Participating practitioner)

*We got what we needed when we needed it.*  
(Participating practitioner)



#### Practitioner feedback on the training

- ✓ 91% understood Pilot expectations after the orientation and training
- ✓ 73% thought the initial training was adequate
- ✓ 54% thought the on-going training was adequate

#### Practitioners offered some **feedback about the training offered**

*It was difficult working with some of the people around the benchmarked resources as they are not open to the way we use resources in family literacy, differently than they would in a program that is more an adult tutor type of model. Children's books have a very important place and role to play and need to be included in the final report. (Participating practitioner)*

*In my opinion, the training session in September on the Read Forward Tool, skewed the direction this pilot took, especially to begin with. There was a ready-made tool (that wasn't appropriate for our pilot and not something I would even use in our adult tutor program) that was easy for people to grab on to right away. It didn't make people think outside the box in using the Benchmarks, which I understood the purpose of the pilot to be. (Participating practitioner)*

*Since my background is in education, I found that the training was geared towards people who did not have the same experience. I felt that I already knew much of the information provided in the training (i.e. teaching strategies and tools). (Participating practitioner)*



Based on their experiences, practitioners offered **suggestions for the province wide implementation.** Some suggestions offered included:

**Training:**

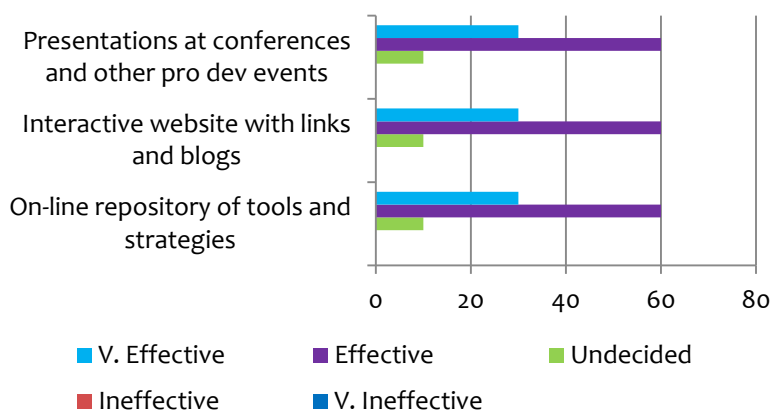
- ✓ Face-to-face training is best at the beginning
- ✓ Offer different formats for different groups (Family literacy, Adult tutor program, Adult classes)

**Supports:**

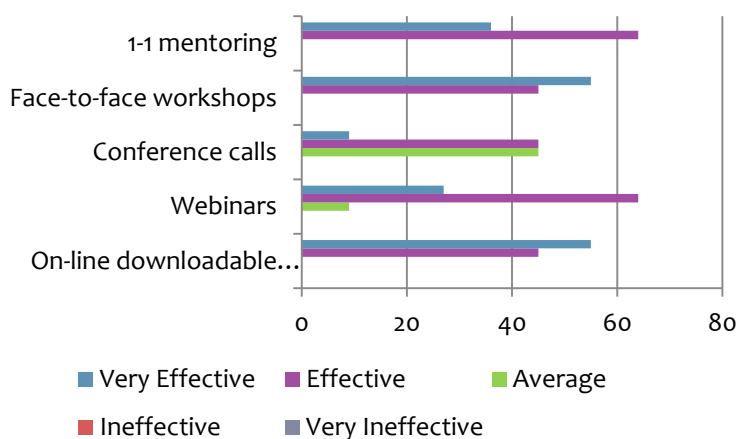
- ✓ A "How to" manual
- ✓ Printed resources
- ✓ Online resources that can be accessed when needed
  - in-service sessions
  - teaching resources

*I think having the benchmark descriptors put in a document with more teaching strategies would be beneficial. The primary reason would be so that people who are not familiar with various teaching strategies could easily match them with the descriptors. For example, I have been involving my volunteers with the benchmarks project, and being able to give them one document with the descriptors plus teaching strategies for their learner would be very helpful. (Participating practitioner)*

**Effective way to share tools/strategies with other practitioners Percentages (n=10)**



**Most effective way to support practitioners to use ARB in their programs Percentages (n=11)**



The evaluation identified that there was some **confusion with the terminology used during the training.** ‘Benchmarks,’ ‘assessment tools’ and ‘teaching tools’ were terms interchangeably used by a number of practitioners. During the June 14 meeting the Pilot Project Facilitator led an activity to explore the understanding of these terms. It became evident that because practitioners used the

different resources for different purposes, they referred to them without differentiating what type of tool they are. For example, although the benchmarks are not per se assessment or teaching tools, because some practitioners used them in their teaching by involving learners in the benchmarking process, they described them as teaching tools. In fact, one of the two sub groups at the June 14 meeting classified all tools and resources shared in the Pilot Project to be benchmarks, assessment and teaching tools.

**This lack of clarity in the use of the terms may not imply a lack of understanding of the conceptual difference among the terms.** Some of the descriptions in the interim and final reports from the practitioners about how the tools were used seem to support this perspective. However, for some practitioners, the use of the words might indicate that there is confusion about the conceptual and practical differences among the tools and resources. In practice this could lead, for example, to benchmarks being used as assessment. Instructors might also teach “to the test” rather than focusing on supporting the learning demonstrated through assessment that can be aligned with the benchmarks. Appendix I includes a glossary and a useful table posted by the BC Ministry of Education to reflect on the different uses of assessment for/as/of learning.

### **Short term outcome 3: Practitioners, funders, partners and administrators provide oversight in the testing of the ARB**

A group of practitioners, funders, government representatives, partners and administrators provided oversight to the Pilot Project and its evaluation through Advisory Committee and Evaluation Committee membership.

An ARB Advisory Committee has been working since the beginning of the ARB project to oversee the entire project. The membership and the sectors they represent are detailed in Appendix J.

To ensure the questions and findings of the evaluation responded to the needs and expectations of the Pilot evaluation, the evaluators interviewed all members of the ARB Advisory Committee (Key Informants) regarding their understandings of the project, the progress of the Pilot activities and their expectations for the evaluation. Summaries of the interviews were shared with interviewees to confirm understandings. These ideas and project documents formed the basis for the first draft of the Evaluation Framework.

**An example of the level of oversight**

*The Monitoring Plan will be developed by Marina and Joy based on the revised Logic Model and circulated to the committee.*

*There was discussion about whether collection of data via focus groups and interviews should be done in person or via telephone/teleconference. There is a final meeting of all pilot site participants in Edmonton on June 14. The group explored the implications of adding time to this gathering to accommodate face-to-face data collection. Joy and Marina will develop options for data collection that will be reviewed by the committee for efficacy of collection of quality data as well as the cost and logistical implications. (March 2013 EC meeting notes)*

The evaluators also convened an **Evaluation Committee (EC)**. The Evaluation Committee, drawn from members of the Advisory Committee, helped guide the process and ensured the appropriateness of the evaluation approach, data collection tools and findings. The evaluators met with the EC four times by teleconference (February, March, July and August). During these meetings the EC members reviewed documents and provided feedback. Electronic communication was used between meetings (for the full membership of the EC please see Appendix H).

The Facilitator and the Trainer were supported through on-going contact with Audrey Gardner, a leader in the project, a member of the ARB Advisory Committee and the Chair of the Evaluation Committee. She is the Coordinator for Research Projects, Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning - Bow Valley College. She also provided on-going consultation to the evaluators.

The strategies described above provided numerous opportunities for practitioners, funders, partners and administrators to guide the process. The data collected (with careful protection of practitioners' identities) and a first draft of this report were also shared with the EC to confirm understandings and ensure the format of the report would serve its anticipated uses.

**Short term outcome 4: Greater awareness of the ARB among Future Stakeholders**

One of the anticipated outcomes of the Pilot Project was to raise interest and awareness in the field of the existence and availability of the ARB and associated tools and resources. To this end a website was published (<http://albertareadingbenchmarks.wordpress.com/>) and populated with information about the Pilot Project, the benchmarks document as well as a few additional reports. The tools and resources developed for the project are not available online. The ARB project was also presented at the Alberta Learning and Literacy Conference in October 2012.

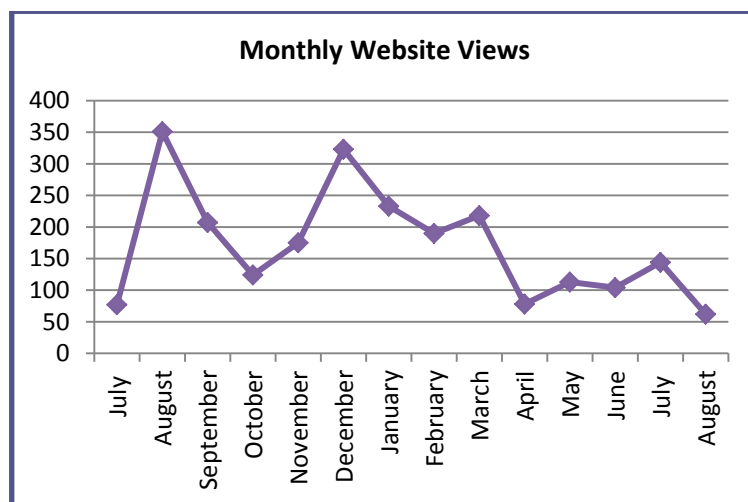
Aside from the strategies described above, it was also expected that practitioners and others involved in the project, would be speaking with their colleagues informally about the ARB. The survey and the site reports collected information about the Pilot Project practitioners' discussions of

the ARB with others. **Practitioners reported they have talked about the ARB** and their implementation with:

- ✓ 100 Adult Literacy practitioners
- ✓ 138 Other Colleagues
- ✓ 172 learners
- ✓ 40 Board Members
- ✓ 70 Members of Partner Agencies
- ✓ 74 Other Individuals

Based on these reports, **over 590 individuals have heard about the ARB project** from practitioners. Since July 2012 the ARB website has have 2,399 views with 13 pages viewed.

August 2012 was the month that registered the most ARB website views with 351 and an average of 11 views per day followed by December 2012 with 323 views and a daily average of 10.



**The information available is not enough to draw conclusions about the achievement of this outcome.** The spike in access registered in August 2012 is consistent with the launch of the Pilot Project. The spike in views registered in December 2012 might be related to the presentation at the Alberta Learning and Literacy Conference in October 2012. However, the differences in website views could be attributed to other factors too. It is clear from this data that **the initial interest was not sustained.** This is not surprising when considered against the backdrop of information posted and updated on the website. There were changes in the coordination of the ARB project and no one was assigned to keep the information on the website updated. It may be that after hearing about the project from other practitioners those who visited the website came back a couple of times did not see any changes or new information and did not visit again.

Starting in June 2013 there is a communication officer dedicated to the website as well as a copy editor working with authors of several reports to make sure ARB information is posted in a timely manner. It will be interesting to assess if these changes have an impact on the number of individuals visiting the website.

## Discussion of Findings

This section summarizes points made in the previous sections of the report in an effort to highlight the aspects of the finding that are relevant to the recommendations of the evaluation.

### About the Pilot Project

- While the practitioners were very professional in their implementation of the Benchmarks, because of a variety of factors that made implementation arduous, it was **overwhelmingly important that they had on-going, non-judgmental and expert support available from the Facilitator.**
- **The level of academic preparation, years of experience, and employment status of the practitioners in the Pilot is not representative** of the group that provide the bulk of adult literacy Instruction in Alberta. Generalizing their experiences as a guide to province- wide implementation needs to take this into account.
- **Some practitioners were confused with the terminology:** benchmarks, assessment tools, teaching tools and which resources fit in the categories. They were interchangeably used by a number of practitioners. The implications of this can influence how the information supplied by the practitioners can be used by government. It is possible the data may be muddy because of term confusion.

### Using the ARB and Related Tools

- Some of the Pilot participating practitioners had **good success in using the ARB in their programs and have indicated they will continue to do so.** They worked in programs that had classes of adult-only learners, with regularly scheduled classes over a long time period. A majority of the practitioners also reported they will use the ARB and benchmarks in the future if their circumstances would allow and if they can see their learners will benefit from this.
- Not all practitioners were able to implement the ARB and the related tools and strategies fully. The **degree of implementation depended on the nature of the program, the learners, the time pressures on the instructor and the cadre of instructors and tutors in the program.** The programs that faced the most challenges were Family Literacy and High School upgrading programs as well as those working with English Language Learners.
- The ARB as they are currently constituted were judged by the practitioners as having value in the following areas: valid for their program (40%), help to communicate with learners (30%), measure learners' progress (50%), helpful in program transfer (20%) and assist in meeting program needs (30%). The majority of practitioners were undecided about these benefits. This is significant, especially related to the kind and amount of support provided to them. In particular, in considering the usefulness of the ARBs to convey learner progress, they were vocal that the **ARB should not be used by funders as a measure of a program's effectiveness** as a variety of other factors also need to be considered.

## The ARB

- Practitioners reported that the ARB, the tools and resources associated with them were helpful but **would have benefitted from being more organized in a comprehensive user-friendly format**. They identified gaps in the resources, tried to develop their own and only learned over the length of the Pilot how the ARB tools and strategies were integrated. In any subsequent implementation it will be important to have a clear, comprehensive user friendly and accessible range of resources at the disposal of the practitioners.
- Practitioners noted that **the language of the benchmarks limited their use with learners**. In the instances they were able to use them with learners, this added to the quality and effectiveness of the instructional experience. However, the majority of practitioners did not use the ARB directly with learners. They indicated that the sentence structure of some of the benchmarks is in some cases too complex for literacy learners at levels 1-3. Students were puzzled by the complexity of the sentences, use of jargon and the lack of examples or explanations. They also noted that there are “gaps” between some levels.
- All of the data collection tools revealed a significant concern of the practitioners in **the narrow scope of the Benchmarks**. Language literacy instruction includes at least four components: reading, writing, speaking and listening. These are not learned or measured in isolation. Implementing one narrow set of benchmarks places limits on the effectiveness of instruction to increase literacy levels generally. To the practitioners, focusing only on reading seemed like a false partition of literacy areas and therefore, dependent on the characteristics of the program and the nature of the learner, the ARB were applied variably or not at all. Practitioners asked for a more comprehensive set of benchmarks and the resources to go with them.
- **If the ARB are used for teaching, (including assessing learners to pinpoint needed teaching/learning strategies and developing/assessing levels of teaching materials) in certain program conditions as described above, they can work well**. If the ARBs and tools are used to assess levels of performance of learners across contexts, extrapolate this to program effectiveness and then the resulting information is used to make funding or other decisions, then there is uncertainty as to its usefulness.
- **Although the term ‘implementation’ has been used by all involved, it has been used to mean different things: emphasis on voluntary (local, situational) use vs. mandatory use**. Voluntary use means the practitioners would use them if they were available, if they fit for the learner and if the practitioner wanted to switch from their usual strategies. At the conclusion of the Pilot, the Facilitator, practitioners, and Trainer were not in favor of mandatory use in the short term. Others think that if they are not required they will not be used. This creates challenges to achieving the anticipated goals of province-wide implementation of the ARB.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations outlined in this section are based on analysis of all data collected, including interviews, surveys, June 14 meeting, documents as well as the EC discussions.

### Generally

1. Consider the development of other benchmarks (writing, listening, and speaking) and related resources. Develop a full package of adult literacy benchmarks and their related resources, develop and implement training methods and make these accessible.
2. Consider delaying full province-wide implementation until the full package of adult literacy benchmarks and resources are ready. Alternately, phase in ARB implementation.

### For the ARB and related resources

1. Re-write the ARB in plain language to make them more accessible to learners.
2. Clarify terminology (e.g. ‘benchmarks,’ ‘assessment tools,’ ‘teaching tools’) to ensure more uniformity in the use of the terms when describing implementation strategies and reporting on learner progress.
3. Explore the potential for developing a more coherent and bulleted document that:
  - a. Shows clearly how one skills leads to the next;
  - b. Provides examples;
  - c. Helps learners plan their learning.
4. Provide an integrated and complete package of resources for practitioners that is user-friendly, clear, useful and accessible.
  - a. The package must be useful and relevant to practitioners.
  - b. Ensure that the learner and learner goals are emphasized.
  - c. Ensure the package includes terminology definitions, foundational information on benchmarking, the ARB in plain language with application examples, teaching strategies, leveling (learners and teaching materials) strategies and clear easy- to-administer assessment tools. Develop and share a “How to use” benchmark resources - a step by step guide. Integrate aboriginal resources and teaching strategies throughout the documents. Other suggested contents:
    - i. Develop a Teaching Strategies section;
    - ii. Align teaching strategies with descriptors;
    - iii. Review the list of resources and consider including selected children’s books;
    - iv. Provide levelled adult resources for each level.
  - d. Use the Canadian Language Benchmarks website and information package as an example of presentation of the resources.



## For ARB implementation

1. Clearly state the ARB Advisory Committee's expectations about implementation: mandatory implementation vs. optional implementation and the time frame for this.
2. Identify the kinds of adult literacy programs that are most likely to be able to implement the ARB for the launch of province-wide implementation. Characteristics of these programs are: groups of learners in regularly scheduled classes over a period of time where it is possible to imbed assessment in the program. Encourage the use of the ARB in these programs.
3. Provide a support structure for implementation that includes orientation, training, resources as identified in the other recommendations and that can include the following features:
  - a. Maintain momentum through soft implementation: optional to groups that are inclined to use ARB and tools.
  - a. Involve some of the same people that were involved in the ARB Pilot Project (Facilitator, Trainer, as well as those Pilot practitioners who are willing to get involved in a different role) to continue to develop capacity by acting as trainers and mentors.
  - b. Develop a process for implementation that is clear with step-by-step instructions and comprehensive and user-friendly resources to ensure that those with limited background can be part of the implementation (e.g. volunteer tutors).
  - c. Use a variety of methods for training: e.g. print resources, resource database and webinars on the website, some face-to-face workshops (e.g. linked to other professional development activities or consider some regional or localized workshops), set up and encourage regional networks of those practitioners who are implementing.
  - d. Make available interactive on-line or telephone support for those implementing the ARB for the first time. Ensure facilitators are well oriented and very familiar with the ARB and other benchmarks (if developed) and with the adult literacy field.
4. To increase the profile of the Benchmarks for the general population, literacy field and government, publish the results of the Pilot Project, make presentations at professional gatherings, and consider press releases and public print and on-line articles.



## APPENDIX A: Pilot Project Terms of Reference and Timeline

### Alberta Reading Benchmarks: Implementation Pilot Project TERMS OF REFERENCE

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## **Project Description: Pilot Implementation of the Alberta Reading Benchmarks**

### **Background:**

The Alberta Reading Benchmarks Project is a multi-year initiative that is creating a provincial set of literacy reading benchmarks and providing key initial resources to implement them. The partners in this initiative include Bow Valley College, Literacy Alberta, Community Learning Network, Centre for Family Literacy, Northern Lakes College, Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, and Alberta Employment and Immigration. This initiative is funded by Alberta Advanced Education and Technology and will carry out some of the key Priority Actions of the Government of Alberta plan for foundational learning called "Living Literacy: A Literacy Framework for Alberta's Next Generation Economy". Through a broad consultation process with Alberta literacy and basic education programs, the Alberta Reading Benchmarks have now been established.

Currently, 2 projects are underway to produce resources and tools to support literacy practitioners in implementing the Alberta Reading Benchmarks. These projects will be completed by summer 2012.

- **Resource Referencing Project:** This project will produce a guide for practitioners to line up the resources they currently use, such as workbooks, readers and text, with specific reading benchmarks. It will also include a list of reading resources which have been aligned with the benchmarks using the referencing process outlined in the guide.
- **Guide for Teaching Strategies for the Alberta Reading Benchmarks:** This project will produce a simple and practical guide for instructors and other practitioners on strategies for teaching reading, aligned with the various levels in the Alberta Reading Benchmarks.

### **Objectives:**

The objective of the pilot project is to explore and create ways to implement the ARB in 10 - 12 pilot test sites across Alberta to identify effective and meaningful applications for the reading benchmarks. The information collected from the pilot will provide the groundwork for recommendations for province-wide implementation in the fall of 2013.

### **Pilot Plan (see detailed schedule at end of document)**

The pilot site programs will be involved in piloting the Benchmarks within the period of September 2012 to June 2013.

1. Initial piloting orientation session for practitioners in pilot site programs
  - May / June 2012
  - Orientation to the pilot
  - Programs will decide the best time and approach to initial training in the fall 2012.
2. Initial training for practitioners in pilot site programs
  - September / October 2012
  - The training is expected to be face-to-face;

- This will provide the parameters and expectations for the piloting.
  - Teaching strategies training for the Reading Benchmarks will be provided plus further orientation to piloting the benchmarks.
3. Pilot implementation in programs
    - September/October 2012 to June 2013.
    - Programs will implement / integrate benchmarks in a way that works best in their situations.
    - Programs will receive support from the project facilitator.
  4. Monthly telephone meetings to discuss the implementation process with facilitator.
  5. Additional training, meetings, and/or online communication to share ideas and experiences between pilot site programs
    - Several virtual meetings will be held for the pilot program group.
  6. Feedback from the pilot site programs. Central to the piloting is the feedback that pilot site programs will provide. In addition to ongoing feedback they might have, pilot site programs will be asked to provide more formal feedback at midpoints and end of the pilot. The feedback will include samples of implementation.
    - Samples of implementation provided with interim and final reports. Examples (items that have incorporated the Reading Benchmarks)
      - lesson materials
      - lesson plans
      - check lists of learner skills or progress
      - tests / assessments
      - learning plan templates
      - program reporting charts / document
    - Initial Implementation Report - November 2012
    - Progress Report - February 2013
    - Final report - April/May 2013

#### Expectations of Pilot Site Programs

- The pilot program will have 1 or 2 practitioners involved in all components of the pilot from beginning of the implementation pilot to the end.
- It is expected the programs will explore how the Reading Benchmarks can be meaningfully integrated for:
  - learning applications,
  - instructional and assessment applications, and
  - program planning and accountability applications.
- It is expected that pilot site programs will provide the feedback and reporting requested of them (see above).

### **Criteria for Participation as a Pilot Program**

- The practitioners involved from the pilot site programs should have two or more years of literacy or basic education experience.

### **Support for Pilot Site Programs**

- There will be a Project Facilitator who will provide support to pilot site programs throughout the period of the pilot.
- Practitioners in pilot site programs will be provided with training.
- Practitioners will be reimbursed for travel expenses if any are incurred.
- Pilot Site organizations will receive \$3,500 for partnering with the Alberta Reading Benchmarks to pilot the benchmarks. Payment will be received upon completion of the deliverables.

### **Deliverables:**

- Attendance at orientation meeting
- Attendance at fall training
- Attendance at other meetings/training deemed necessary by the pilot testers and the pilot facilitator
- Participation in monthly telephone/video meetings and check-ins with the project facilitator
- Provide 5 samples of implementation with each report (a minimum of 15 samples)
- Completion of all required interim reports
  - Initial Implementation Report
  - Progress Report
- Completion of final report

**Pilot Project Facilitator:** Corrie Rhyasen Erdman [cerdman@telus.net](mailto:cerdman@telus.net)

## Alberta Reading Benchmarks Implementation Pilot

### Schedule

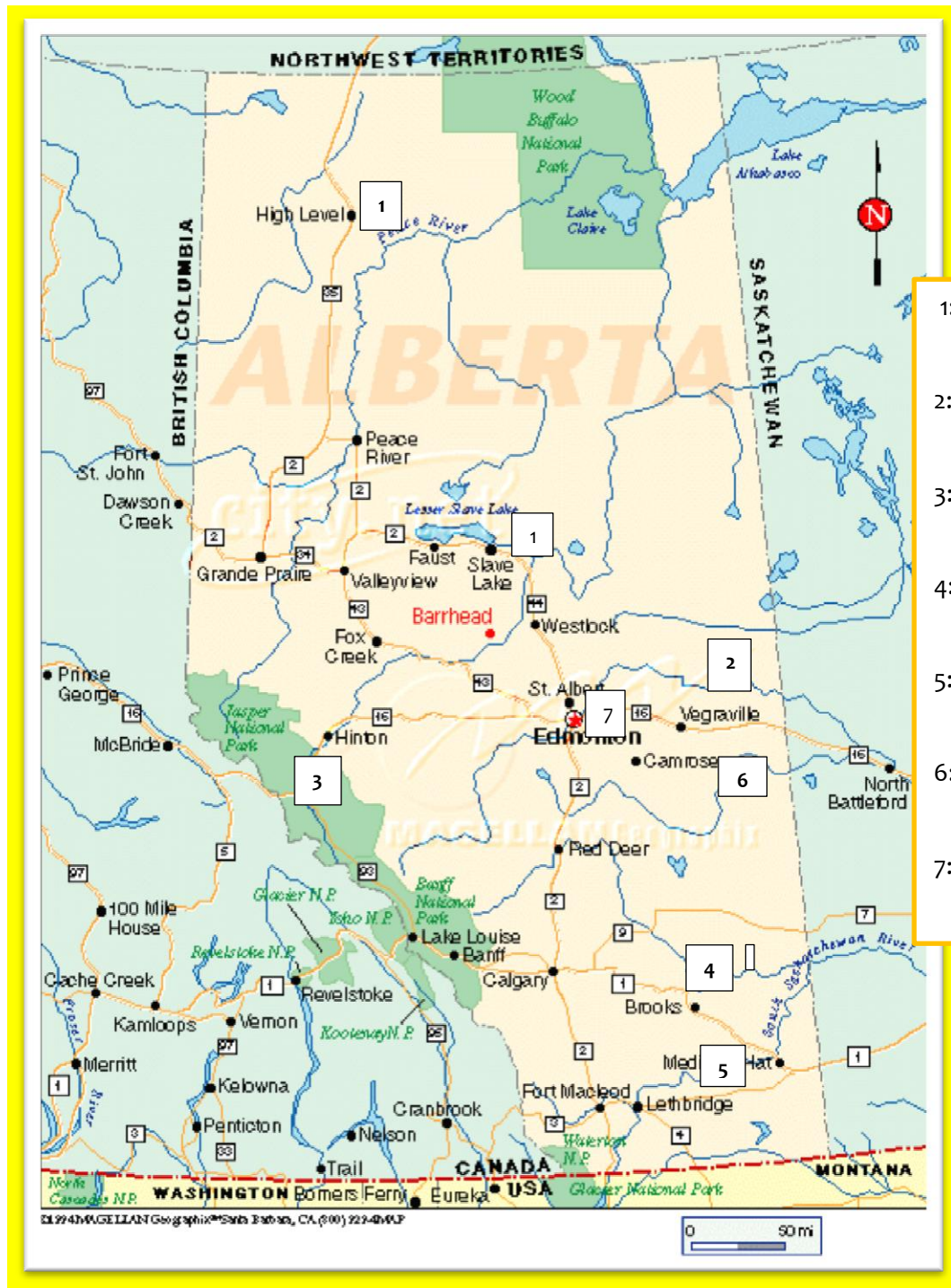
#### 2012

May	28:	Orientation meeting
September		Implementation begins
	4:	Read Forward Training
	5:	ARB Training in Spruce Grove
	24:	Blog post & discussion
October:		Individual phone consultation/check-in
	9:	Blog post & discussion
	17-19	Literacy & Learning Symposium
	29:	Blog post & discussion
November		Individual phone consultation/check-in
	12:	Blog post & discussion
	23:	Video Conference Meeting
	30:	<b>Initial Implementation Report Due + 5 samples of implementation</b>
December:		Individual phone consultation/check-in
	3:	Blog post & discussion
	17:	Blog post & discussion

#### 2013 *Blog posts and discussions TBD*

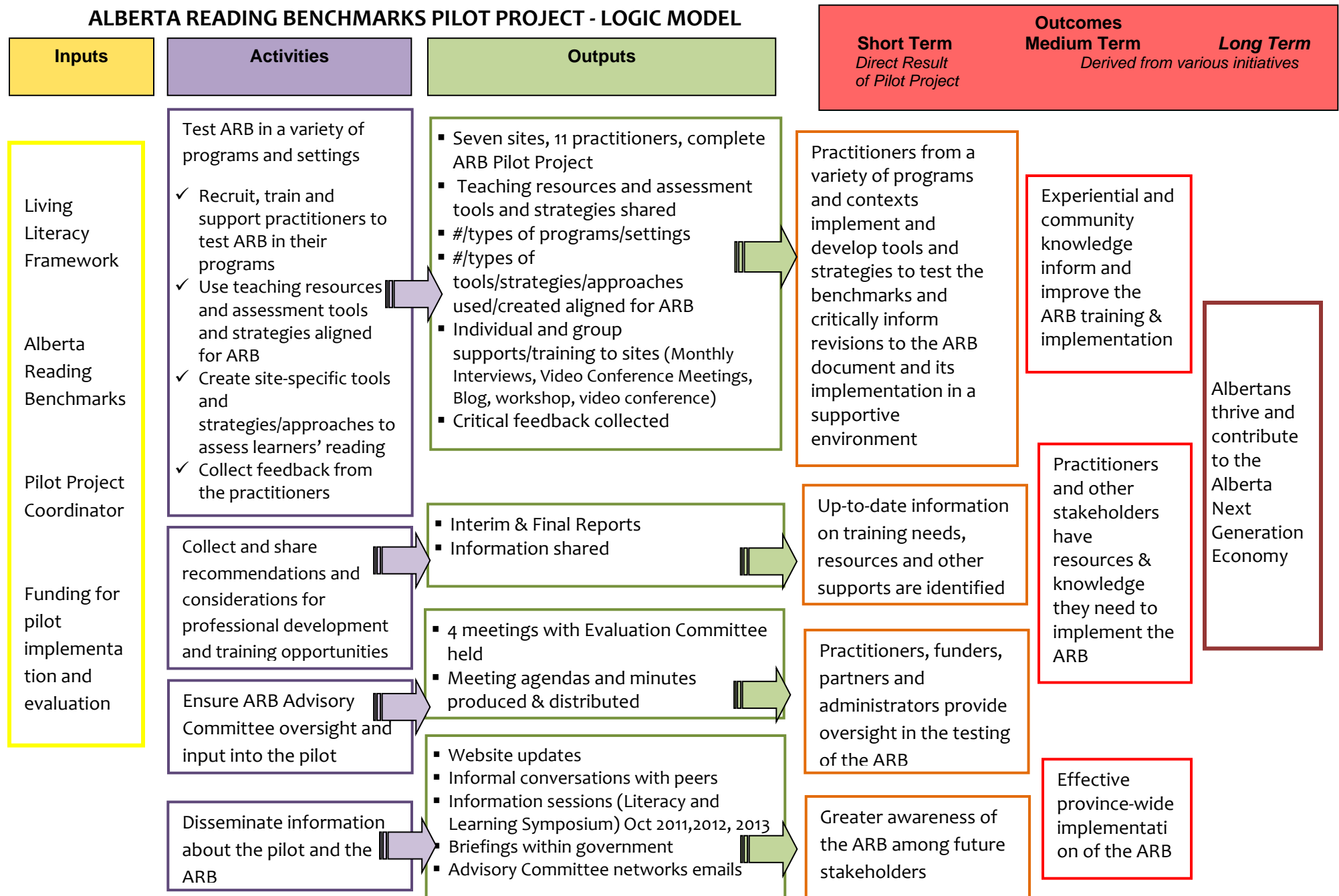
January:		Individual phone consultation/check-in
February	22:	Individual phone consultation/check-in
		Video Conference Meeting
	28:	<b>Progress Report Due + 5 samples of implementation</b>
March:		Individual phone consultation/check-in
April:		Individual phone consultation/check-in
May:		Individual phone consultation/check-in
	10:	<b>Final Report Due + 5 samples of implementation</b>
June:		Individual phone consultation/check-in
	14:	Final meeting (Centre for Family Literacy, Edmonton)

## APPENDIX B: LOCATION of PILOT SITES



## APPENDIX C: Evaluation Framework

### ALBERTA READING BENCHMARKS PILOT PROJECT - LOGIC MODEL





## Evaluation Data

Short Term Outcomes	Indicators	Data Source
<p><b>Practitioners from a variety of programs and contexts implement and develop tools and strategies to test the benchmarks and critically inform revisions to the ARB document and its implementation in a supportive environment</b></p> <p>Variety of programs and contexts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ No decision process recorded</li> <li>✓ Map and characteristics of participating programs (see Appendix B)</li> <li>✓ Characteristics of Adult Literacy delivery in Alberta (see footnote 1 on page 6 of Evaluation Report)</li> </ul> <p><b>Types of programs that tested benchmarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Funding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 55% (6) Government - Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education</li> <li>• 18% (2) Government - Employability Training</li> <li>• 45% (5) Other: Edmonton Catholic School District, Alberta Human Services, private funders, various sources</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>Location</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 82% (9) Small Population Centre (population 1,000 to 29,999)</li> <li>• 18% (2) Large Population Centre (population 100,000 or greater)</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b># of learners in program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range of 15-192</li> <li>• Average # of learners across pilot sites: 52 learners</li> <li>• These data may not be accurate as some of the responses reflect the # of learners for the whole institution/organization. Whereas other responses reflect the # of learners in the practitioner's class.</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b># of volunteer tutors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range of 0-33. For the 5 programs that have tutors, the range goes from 1-33 (1, 4, 8, 10, 33)</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>Population of program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45% (5) Aboriginal learners</li> <li>• 36% (4) Adult Literacy learners (Adults who have English as their first language and low literacy skills)</li> <li>• 36% (4) ESL Literacy (Adults who have low literacy skills in their first language)</li> <li>• 27% (3) ESL learners</li> <li>• 18% (2) ABE/GED/HS Upgrading learners</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Advisory Committee Meetings minutes</li> <li>✓ Review of Documents &amp; Websites</li> <li>✓ Project documents (including interim and final site reports) analysis</li> <li>✓ On-line survey</li> </ul>



- 9% (1) Other: families
- ✓ **Barriers learners face**
  - Economic (6), Low literacy skills (5), Transportation (5), Childcare (3), History of low educational skills & achievement (3), Isolation (3), Family problems (3), Addiction issues (2), Education has low priority in their community (2), Lack of motivation (2), Language (2), Learning/Developmental Challenges
- ✓ **Focus of program**
  - 45% (5) ABE/GED/HS Upgrading, 36% (4) Adult Literacy, 36% (4) ESL, 27% (3) Family Literacy, 9% (1) Employment
- ✓ **Affiliation of program**
  - 55% (6) A Community Organization, 36% (4) A Higher Education Institution, 18% (2) Other: Community Adult Learning Association, Catholic School Board
- ✓ **# of full-time instructors in program**
  - Ranges from 0 to 26. Out of the 7 programs with full time instructors, the range goes from 1-26 (1, 1, 2, 2, 5, 5, 26)
- Experience of practitioners involved in pilot project**
- ✓ **Training**
  - 45% (5) No formal training in Adult Literacy, 36% (4) University degree related to Adult Literacy, 27% (3) Other: 1 class (following B.ED. elementary), Certificate in Family Literacy (College Program), Bachelor of Education, 9% (1) College level diploma/certificate related to Adult Literacy
- ✓ **Employment**
  - 55% (6) Instructor, 36% (4) Coordinator, 27% (3) Other: Literacy and Essential Skills Coach, Program Director, Family literacy facilitator
  - 91% (10 ) Full time, 36% (4) Permanent, 9% (1) Part time, 9% (1) Other: Contract
  - 6 respondents report having more than one role in their organization: Literacy and Essentials Coach, Career and Employment Counselor, GED instructor program coordinator, Program Director, Executive Director, United Church Minister, Workplace Essential Skills practitioner, Volunteer Coordinator, Contract work for other organizations
- ✓ **Years in the current position**
  - Ranges from under one year (for 3 respondents) to 25 years. (1, 2, 5, 6, 7.5, 23, 25)
- ✓ **Years teaching in the field of Adult Literacy**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ranges from 0 (for 3 respondents) to 10 (one response). (1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 7, 7, 10)</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Additional Training</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree in Education (2), New Coordinator Training with Alberta Literacy, B.Ed. elementary, All Family literacy training models and Introduction to family literacy, Masters of Education, TESOL, K-12 and Adult Education, As many workshops that I can take that will help me do my job better and help the learner in the end, Masters of Theology degree, an ESL certificate, and training for Workplace Essential Skills through Literacy Alberta,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Implementation and development of tools and strategies to test the benchmarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>100% of practitioners participating in Pilot Project report that they implemented tools and strategies to use the ARB</b></li> </ul>	✓ On-line survey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>% of practitioners who used tools and strategies provided by the training</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% <b>used</b> 3/10 tools or strategies (ARB, ARB Quick Reference Guide, ARB Resources List)</li> <li>• 55% <b>never used</b> ARB Resources List – Aboriginal</li> <li>• 27% <b>never used</b> the Read Forward Skills Assessment</li> <li>• 19% <b>never used</b> 4/10 tools or strategies (Read Forward, Read Forward Skills Alignment, Quick Guide for Referencing Resources, Analysis for Benchmarking)</li> <li>• 9% <b>never used</b> ARB Teaching Strategies Guide</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>% of practitioners who have used the tools provided during the Pilot training</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARB: used sometimes (27%), usually (55%)</li> <li>• ARB Quick Reference Guide: used sometimes (64%), usually (36%)</li> <li>• Read Forward: used sometimes (27%), usually (27%), always (27%)</li> <li>• Read Forward Skills Alignment: used sometimes (45%), usually (9%)</li> <li>• Read Forward Segment Activities: used sometimes (36%), usually (18%), always (9%)</li> <li>• ARB Teaching Strategies Guide: used sometimes (27%), usually (27%)</li> <li>• Quick Guide for Referencing Resources: used sometimes (45%), usually (18%)</li> <li>• Analysis for Benchmarking: used sometimes (45%), usually (9%)</li> <li>• ARB Resources List: used sometimes (36%), usually (27%)</li> <li>• ARB Resources List – Aboriginal: used sometimes (18%)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	✓ On-line survey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>% of tools and strategies provided by the Pilot training that were useful in their program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9/10 of the tools/strategies were rated by 9-55% of practitioners as <b>not useful</b></li> <li>• Tools/strategies rated the highest as <b>somewhat useful</b> were ARB Resources List (91%), ARB Teaching Strategies Guide (82%), Quick Guide for Referencing Resources (73%) and Analysis for Benchmarking (73%)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Document analysis</li> <li>✓ Interview with Corrie</li> <li>✓ On-line Survey</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tools/strategies rated as <b>very useful</b>: ARB (55%), Read Forward (55%), ARB Quick Reference Guide (45%)</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>% of tools and strategies provided by the Pilot training linked to existing resources in their program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tools most <b>strongly linked</b> to programs were: ARB Resources list (60%), Read Forward (60%), ARB Quick Reference Guide (50%)</li> <li>Tools participants were <b>undecided about</b> the link were: Analysis for Benchmarking (60%), Quick Guide for Referencing Resources (50%), ARB Resources List- Aboriginal (50%)</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>Tools and strategies developed by the sites and shared (blog)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tools to benchmark learning resources in Family Literacy programs</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>No tools nor strategies developed by practitioners were used by other sites</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Document analysis</li> <li>✓ Interview with Corrie</li> <li>✓ On-line Survey</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Examples of how available tools and strategies apply to learning environments</b>  <i>I mainly used the ReadForward locator and segment tests during a few courses I taught. For example, I recently completed an IELTS Preparation Course and I used the locator tests at the beginning of the course to identify their reading levels. I then used the segment tests as assignments and in-class exercises to target specific reading strategies needed for the IELTS exam. In addition, I provided my volunteer tutors with the descriptors and teaching strategies guide to assist them with their learners. Since I also provide one-on-one instruction, I also used the descriptors and a few strategies from the teaching strategies guide. Similarly, I used the Skills Alignment duotang with some of my literacy learners.</i>   <i>The ARB's are not relevant to our program the way the ESL Literacy Phases are. I did find the Read Forward materials helpful as supplemental resources. I used them at times, but was always aware they were designed for English literacy learners, and not ESL literacy learners. The ARB Resource List was helpful for resources that could be used to design activities around. I liked the way the ARB's were broken out into "Types of Texts..", "Types of Reading...", and "Decoding Skills..", and used these to help when creating activities and lesson plans</i> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ On-line Survey</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Examples of how tools and strategies developed by other pilot sites apply/do not apply to the learning environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sites did not use tools/strategies developed by other sites</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Individual Interviews and Focus Groups</li> <li>✓ On-line Survey</li> </ul>
<b>Critical feedback to inform revisions to the</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Types of opportunities to share feedback on the ARB and its implementation at each pilot site</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each site completed an Interim and Final Report with set questions on strategies, challenges for ARB implementation. Each site attended a final session on June 14 and provided feedback on the ARB</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Document analysis</li> <li>✓ Interview with Corrie</li> </ul>

ARB document and its implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>% of practitioners who report that the ARB benchmarks are a useful way to assist with measuring the progress of their learners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% agreed or strongly agreed, 20% were undecided, 30% disagreed or strongly disagreed</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>% of practitioners who report that the ARB are useful in conveying learner progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To learners: 50% agreed or strongly agreed, 20% were undecided, 30% disagreed or strongly disagreed</li> <li>• To other instructors: 40% agreed or strongly agreed, 40% were undecided, 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed</li> <li>• To other programs: 40% agreed, 40% were undecided, 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed</li> <li>• To funders: 10% strongly agreed, 60% were undecided, 30% disagreed or strongly disagreed</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>% of practitioners who report that using the ARB will be useful in re-developing/aligning programs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the instructors: 40% agreed or strongly agreed, 40% were undecided, 20% disagreed</li> <li>• For the program: 40% agreed or strongly agreed, 40% were undecided, 20% disagreed</li> <li>• For the organization: 40% agreed or strongly agreed, 40% were undecided, 20% disagreed</li> <li>• For the literacy field: 50% agreed or strongly agreed, 40% were undecided, 10% disagreed</li> <li>• For funders: 30% agreed or strongly agreed, 50% were undecided, 20% disagreed</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>% of practitioners who report that their teaching practice has changed as a result of using the ARB</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner selection : 60% definitely not, 20% unsure, 20% probably</li> <li>• Class preparation: 50% definitely, 30% unsure, 20 % probably/definitely not</li> <li>• Perception of my learners: 50% probably, 40% definitely/ probably not</li> <li>• Resource selection: 50% probably, , 10% definitely, 40% undecided</li> <li>• Teaching approach and strategies: 60% probably, 40% probably not</li> <li>• Assessment Strategies: 20% definitely, 50% probably, 20% undecided, 20% probably/ definitely not</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>70% of participating practitioners plan to use the ARB and the related tools and strategies in my program in the future</b></li> </ul>	✓ On-line Survey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Examples of how implementation of ARB may impact each program and its learners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Evaluation and Site Reports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ On-line Survey</li> <li>✓ Document Analysis</li> <li>✓ Focus Groups</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Examples of feedback on benchmarks by pilot testing sites</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Evaluation and Site Reports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Document Analysis</li> <li>✓ Individual Interviews</li> <li>✓ Focus Groups</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Examples of feedback and recommendations on the ARB document</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Evaluation and Site Reports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Individual interviews</li> <li>✓ Document Analysis</li> <li>✓ Focus Groups</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Examples of tools and approaches used to aid ARB implementation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Evaluation and Site Reports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Focus Groups</li> <li>✓ Document analysis</li> <li>✓ Interview with Corrie</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Examples of feedback and recommendations on ARB implementation with specific program type/learner population</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Evaluation and Site Reports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Individual interviews</li> <li>✓ Document analysis</li> <li>✓ Interview with Corrie</li> </ul>
<b>Supportive environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>100% of practitioners felt supported by the different activities</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ On- line Survey</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>% of practitioners who felt supported by different individuals/resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By the Facilitator: 91% strongly agree, 9% agree</li> <li>• By their site supervisor: 26% strongly agree, 5% agree, 18% undecided</li> <li>• By work colleagues: 27% strongly agree, 45% agree, 27% undecided</li> <li>• By Pilot colleagues: 9% strongly agree, 36% agree, 55% undecided</li> <li>• By the written materials: 73% agree, 9% undecided, 18% disagree</li> <li>• By the website: 9% strongly agree, 36% agree, 36% undecided, 18% disagree</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ On-line Survey</li> <li>✓ Individual interviews</li> <li>✓ Focus Groups</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Overall, the support provided by the Pilot Project was adequate to use the ARB in my program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 36% strongly agree, 36% agree, 27% disagree</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Examples provided by practitioners about good/effective ways used to support them</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Evaluation and Site Reports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>% of practitioners who felt the amount of orientation and training was adequate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 27% strongly agree, 64% agree, 9% undecided</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ On- line Survey</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>% of participating practitioners who felt comfortable providing suggestions for changes about</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARB: 9% strongly agree, 82% agree, 9% disagree</li> <li>• ARB use: 18% strongly agree, 64% agree, 18% undecided</li> <li>• Teaching tools and strategies: 9% strongly agree, 45% agree, 27% undecided, 18% disagree</li> <li>• Assessment tools and strategies: 18% strongly agree, 45% agree, 27% undecided, 9% disagreed</li> <li>• Orientation: 18% strongly agree, 36% agree, 36% undecided, 9% disagree</li> <li>• Training: 27% strongly agree, 45% agree, 18% undecided, 9% disagree</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ On- line Survey</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Average hours each site required to implement the benchmarks (in half days)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey: Average 28 half days. Responses on survey range from 7.5 – 60 (7.5, 8, 10, 20 (3), 30, 45, 56, 60)</li> <li>• Site Reports: Average 38 half days. Responses range from 1 – 213 (1, 4, 7, 10, 20 (2), 31, 213)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ On- line Survey</li> <li>✓ Document Analysis</li> </ul>

Up-to-date information on training needs, resources and other supports are identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Recommendations for professional development and training</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Evaluation Report</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>% of practitioners who report training was adequate for their needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 27% strongly agree, 64% agree, 9% undecided</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>Examples of changes to training made/suggested</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Evaluation and Site Reports</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>Examples of resources/training strategies recommended to be included in the training program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Evaluation and Site Reports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Document Analysis</li> <li>✓ On- line Survey</li> <li>✓ Individual Interviews</li> <li>✓ Focus Groups</li> </ul>
Greater awareness of the ARB among future stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b># of ARB website hits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since July 2012 – 2,399 website hits with 13 pages viewed, daily average of 10</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ <b>Practitioners have talked about the ARB with</b> 100 Adult Literacy practitioners, 138 Other Colleagues, 172 learners, 40 Board Members, 70 Members of Partner Agencies, 74 Other Individuals for a total of over 590 individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Google Analytics</li> <li>✓ Informal conversations</li> <li>✓ Focus Groups</li> <li>✓ Individual Interviews</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX D: Invitation Letter to Participate in Pilot Project Evaluation

### LETTER TO PRACTITIONERS

Hello,

As you know, we are conducting the evaluation of the Alberta Reading Benchmarks Pilot Project. We began the evaluation work in December 2012 and will be engaged in this process until August 30<sup>th</sup>. We have been working closely with Audrey Gardner, Corrie Rhyasen Erdman and an Evaluation Committee to ensure accuracy and effectiveness of the evaluation. We have developed an evaluation framework (attached) that focuses on the aspects of the Pilot that we are evaluating.

As you will see in the evaluation framework, we are using multiple methods to collect data to ensure its validity, however we want to be respectful of everyone's time and make decisions as to the most efficient way of accessing information. We do not want you to have to repeat the same information several times.

Since you are involved in the Pilot, and since the evaluation focuses on the experience of practitioners using the ARB in their setting, the data we collect from you is vital. We would like to collect information about your experience with the Pilot Project through three direct methods:

1. **On-line survey** - made available to you April 15 -30 2013
2. **Group discussion** - conducted at the **June 14<sup>th</sup>** wrap-up session for the Pilot Project in Edmonton (we will be attending the session)
3. **Individual interviews** - we would like to interview you **either in-person or by telephone**. If there is more than one practitioner testing the ARB in your organization, you can choose to be interviewed alone or to share the interview with the other practitioner(s) involved.  
**In-person interviews:** We will be available in Edmonton to conduct in-person interviews on **June 13 (noon to 8 pm)** and **June 15 (9 am to 1 pm)**. Each interview will take approximately 1.5 hours. If you choose to have an interview on the 15<sup>th</sup>, arrangements will be made to extend your hotel accommodation for one additional night.  
If you choose to have a **telephone interview**, we will conduct these prior to June 12<sup>th</sup> or after June 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Please let us know your preferences by filling in the form on the next page.** We ask that you **get back to us by Wednesday April 10<sup>th</sup>** so we can make our travel plans.

**If you have any questions about this evaluation project, please feel free to contact us at [mnconsulting@shaw.ca](mailto:mnconsulting@shaw.ca)**

We are looking forward to hearing from you,

**Marine Niks and Joy Page**

Please fill in with your preferences and email this page to [mnconsulting@shaw.ca](mailto:mnconsulting@shaw.ca) no later than Wednesday April 10<sup>th</sup>.

Your name:

I would like to schedule an interview:

By phone:

Before June 12<sup>th</sup> ☐

After June 17<sup>th</sup> ☐

Or

In person:

On June 13<sup>th</sup> ☐

On June 15<sup>th</sup> ☐

I would like to be interviewed alone ☐

I would like to be interviewed with my colleague \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you! We will try our best to accommodate your preferences.

Joy Page and Marina Niks



## APPENDIX E: Survey Questions

### ARB Pilot Project Evaluation

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#### Introduction

This survey is part of the evaluation of the Alberta Reading Benchmark Pilot Project. It is intended for practitioners who piloted the benchmarks, tools and strategies to fill out individually. The survey will be available between April 17th and May 10th 2013. The questions included in the survey will allow you to express your opinions and share experiences about the process and outcomes of the Pilot. We will also be facilitating a group discussion on June 14 in Edmonton and scheduling individual interviews to gather more information. The survey is organized in 7 sections: Program Background, Your Work in Adult Literacy, Support Provided by Pilot Project, Training, Tools and Strategies, About the ARB and Final Thoughts. Depending on how much detail you provide, the survey may take up to one hour to complete. Once you start the survey, you may exit at any time and return at a later date to complete it by selecting the Save and Continue Later button at the bottom of each page. We want you to feel comfortable in freely expressing your opinions and sharing experiences with the knowledge that your identity will be kept confidential. Only the evaluators will have access to the data. Survey results will be presented in aggregate. Illustrative excerpts may be used as long as they can be presented in a way that will not permit identification. All identifying information included in the responses will be removed and will not appear in the presentation of results. For more information about the survey, or if you have any questions about the evaluation, please contact Marina and Joy by email at [mnconsulting@shaw.ca](mailto:mnconsulting@shaw.ca). By checking the next box, you agree to participate in the survey.

☐ I agree to participate

#### Program Background

The following questions will allow us to have an understanding of the context within which your program is situated.

#### My program is funded by

- ☐ Government - Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education
- ☐ Government - Employability Training
- ☐ Foundation
- ☐ Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

#### My program is affiliated with

- ☐ A Higher Education Institution
- ☐ A Community Organization
- ☐ Not affiliated with another organization

☐ Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

**My program is located in a**

- ☐ Small Population Centre (population 1,000 to 29,999)
- ☐ Medium Population Centre (population 30,000 to 99,999)
- ☐ Large Population Centre (population 100,000 or greater)
- ☐ Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

**The main focus of my program is**

- ☐ Adult Literacy
- ☐ ESL
- ☐ ABE/GED/HS Upgrading
- ☐ Family Literacy
- ☐ Employment
- ☐ Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of full-time instructors in my program (If there are no full-time instructors in your program, please enter 0)**

**Number of part-time instructors in my program (If there are no part-time instructors in your program, please enter 0)**

**Number of tutors in my program (If there are no tutors in your program, please enter 0)**

**Number of learners in my program**

**Most of the learners in the program are:**

- ☐ Aboriginal learners
- ☐ Adult Literacy learners (Adults who have English as their first language and low literacy skills)

- ☐ ESL Literacy (Adults who have low literacy skills in their first language)
- ☐ ESL learners
- ☐ Incarcerated learners
- ☐ ABE/GED/HS Upgrading learners
- ☐ Other - please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Most of the learners in my program face the following barriers:**

Please list:

### **About Your Work in Adult Literacy**

We'd like to have a good understanding of the preparation and employment conditions of the practitioners who piloted the benchmarks.

**How many years have you been teaching in the field of Adult Literacy?**

**What is your current position? Please respond in relation to your role as an ARB Pilot Tester.**

- ☐ Instructor
- ☐ Facilitator
- ☐ Tutor
- ☐ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**If you work in other roles in this or other organizations, please tell us where and what roles you play.**

**Please indicate your current employment situation**

- ☐ Temporary
- ☐ Permanent
- ☐ Part time
- ☐ Full time
- ☐ Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

**How many years have you been in your current position?**

**Please indicate the level of formal training you completed related to Adult Literacy before you became involved in the ARB Pilot.**

- ☐ No formal training in Adult Literacy
- ☐ College level diploma/certificate related to Adult Literacy
- ☐ University degree related to Adult Literacy
- ☐ Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Additional Training**

Please tell us about any other formal or informal training you completed before you became involved in the ARB Pilot.

#### **About the Pilot Project: Support**

**I felt comfortable to ask for specific help during the pilot**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

#### **Comments**

**The following activities were effective in providing support for me**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Didn't attend
Orientation session	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training in September	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training in February	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monthly calls with Facilitator	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Video conference in November	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blog postings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Comments**

**During the Pilot Project I felt supported**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
By the Pilot Project Facilitator (Corrie)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
By my site supervisor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
By my colleagues in my setting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
By other Pilot site colleagues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
By the written materials provided	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
By the website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Please provide examples of how you felt supported by the different individuals or resources**

**Overall, the support provided by the Pilot Project was adequate to use the ARB in my program**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

**Comments**

**I felt comfortable providing suggestions and recommendations about**

Strongly Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly

	Disagree			Agree	
ARB	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ARB use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teaching tools and strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assessment tools and strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Orientation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### Comments

Please estimate how much time (half days) you used to implement the ARB in your setting

Based on your experience and looking forward to province wide implementation, which are the most effective ways to support practitioners to use the ARB in their programs?

	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Average	Effective	Very effective
Online Downloadable Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Webinars	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conference Calls	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Face-to-face Workshops	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1 to 1 Mentorship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other ways to support practitioners...

Please tell us how many individuals you have talked to about the ARB and their implementation

Adult Literacy practitioners

Other colleagues

Learners	<input type="text"/>
Board Members	<input type="text"/>
Members of partner agencies	<input type="text"/>
Others	<input type="text"/>

### About the Pilot Project: Training

Please indicate the appropriate response

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I understood the Pilot expectations of me after the orientation and training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The initial training was adequate in assisting me to Pilot the ARB in my program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The on-going training was adequate in assisting me to Pilot the ARB in my program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following training was delivered at the right time to support me in piloting the ARB in my program

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
ARB	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The resource referencing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The teaching strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read Forward	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Comments

The following training was delivered in the right format to support me in piloting the ARB in my program

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
ARB	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The resource referencing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The teaching strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read Forward	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### Comments

#### The following training had relevant content to support me in piloting the ARB in my program

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
ARB	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The resource referencing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The teaching strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read Forward	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### Comments

In your opinion, what form and content of training is needed to support and/or improve ARB use?

#### About the ARB Pilot Project: Tools and Strategies

I have used the following tools provided during the Pilot training:

	Never	Rarely (in less than 20% of the times when I could have)	Sometimes (in about 50% of the times when I could have)	Usually (in about 80% of the times I could have)	Every time
Alberta Reading Benchmarks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ARB Quick Reference Guide	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read Forward	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read Forward Skills Alignment (Red Duotang)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Read Forward Segment Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ARB Teaching Strategies Guide	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quick Guide for Referencing Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analysis For Benchmarking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ARB Resources List	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ARB Resources List - Aboriginal Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The tools and strategies provided by the Pilot training were useful in my program

	Not Useful At All	Somewhat Useful	Very Useful
Alberta Reading Benchmarks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ARB Quick Reference Guide	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read Forward	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read Forward Skills Alignment (Red Duotang)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read Forward Segment Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ARB Teaching Strategies Guide	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quick Guide for Referencing Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analysis For Benchmarking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ARB Resources List	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ARB Resources List - Aboriginal Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The tools and strategies provided by the Pilot training linked to existing resources in my program

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Alberta Reading Benchmarks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ARB Quick Reference Guide	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read Forward	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Read Forward Skills Alignment (Red Duotang)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read Forward Segment Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ARB Teaching Strategies Guide	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quick Guide for Referencing Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analysis For Benchmarking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ARB Resources List	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ARB Resources List - Aboriginal Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please provide examples of how the tools and strategies provided during the Pilot Project training APPLIED to your program.

Please provide examples of how the tools and strategies provided during the training DID NOT APPLY to your program.

Please list the tools and strategies you have developed in order to use the ARB in your program.

Which of those listed above have you shared with other Pilot sites?

Please list the tools and/or strategies developed by other sites that you have used.

Please number each tool /strategy so you can rate each in the next question

Indicate how useful the tools and strategies developed by other sites were for your program.

	Not Useful At All	Somewhat Useful	Very Useful
Tool/Strategy 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tool/Strategy 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Tool/Strategy 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tool/Strategy 4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tool/Strategy 5	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tool/Strategy 6	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please give examples of the usefulness of the tools and strategies developed by the other sites.

Please use the numbers assigned above to the tools/strategies when providing examples of usefulness.

1

2

3

4

5

6

Please list/describe other tools or strategies that you think should be developed to aid future implementation of the ARB

Based on your experience and looking forward to province wide implementation, which are the most effective ways to share tools and strategies with practitioners to use when using the ARB in their programs?

	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Average	Effective	Very effective
Online repository of tools and strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interactive website with links and blogs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presentations at conferences and other professional development events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other ways to share tools...

### About the Alberta Reading Benchmarks

Please indicate the appropriate response

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
The ARB help me communicate with learners in my program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ARB are a useful way to assist measurement of learner progress in my program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ARB will assist my learners to move between programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ARB assist in meeting the needs in my program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ARB are valid for my program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments?

The ARB are useful in conveying learner progress

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
To learners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To other instructors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To other programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To funders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments?

Using the ARB will be useful in re-developing/aligning programs

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Undecided   Agree   Strongly Agree

For the instructor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For the individual program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For the organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For the literacy field	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For funders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments?

My teaching practice has changed as a result of using the ARB

	Definitely Not	Probably Not	Not Sure	Probably	Definitely
Learner selection (which learners will be accepted to the program)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Class preparation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Perception of the learners (instructors' perception of the learners)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Resource selection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teaching approach and strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assessment strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Curriculum content development/design	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments?

Pilot testing of the ARB has had an impact on:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
My program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My teaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My learners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please explain how the Pilot had an impact

I plan to use the ARB and the related tools and strategies in my program in the future

☐ Yes

☐ No

Comments?

#### ARB: Final Thoughts

What would you say are the major benefits that the adult literacy and essential skills field in Alberta will see from the implementation of the ARB?

What would you say are the main challenges the implementation of the ARB will face? Can you describe ways to mitigate them?

What would you say are the main drawbacks that the adult literacy and essential skills field in Alberta could face as a consequence of implementing the ARB?

Are there any other comments about the ARB Pilot Project you would like to share?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS EVALUATION SURVEY! YOUR FEEDBACK WILL BE VERY VALUABLE IN DETERMINING THE NEXT STEPS IN THE ALBERTA READING BENCHMARKS IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT.

## APPENDIX F: Individual Interview Questions

### Individual Interview Questions - Practitioners

#### 1. *Participation in the Pilot Project*

How did you **become involved**? How was the **experience** for you? How much time did you spend overall? Were you **compensated** for the additional time?

When did you feel the **most engaged/energized** in this project? How have your **motives and driving passion changed** over time?

#### 2. *Impact*

What have you **learned** as a result of being involved in this project?

How does this learning **shape your perceptions** of yourself as an adult literacy educator? (How) does it make a difference in what you believe to be important?

What would you say is your most significant **triumph** in this project? What was the most significant **challenge**?

#### 3. *Looking forward*

Do you see this project **connecting with other projects/initiatives** underway or planned at your centre/program? How?

Are there any **changes needed for the ARB** to be implemented successfully? What does success look like?

### ARB Pilot Evaluation Project

#### Data Collection: Interview with Lorene Anderson

#### Background and Role

How did you come to be involved in this program?

1. What is your background in adult literacy?
2. Please describe your role with this project and with the ARB implementation in general? Who do your report to? How much time is devoted to your role? What will be the length of your involvement with ARB implementation?
3. Did you feel supported in your role? By whom and how?

#### Pilot Implementation

1. Tell us your general impressions of the effectiveness of this project. Strengths? Challenges?

2. In your opinion, how applicable are the ARB to the range of adult literacy programs represented in the pilot? Is the mix of Pilot sites representative of the variety of adult literacy programming in Alberta? If not, what is missing?

### **Pilot Practitioner Training**

1. Please highlight some examples of ways in which Pilot practitioners were provided with training and resources by you or others to implement the ARB in their setting.
2. What recommendations have you for training? Resource development and application? Support for implementation? Schedule for implementation?
3. How do you think province-wide implementation of the benchmarks can be facilitated? What specific measures should be planned and used?

### **ARB Pilot Evaluation Project**

#### **Data Collection Interview with Corrie Rhyasen Erdman**

1. Please tell us about your background in adult literacy.
2. How did you come to be involved in this program?
3. Who constructed the activities in the Pilot?
4. How were sites chosen?
5. Does this accurately represent the time spent time?
6. How much time is devoted to the Coordinator role?
7. Did you feel supported in your role? By whom and how?
8. Please highlight some examples of ways in which programs were able to implement the ARB in their setting and the tools/resources they used.
9. Did the pilot sites chosen represent the range of adult literacy programs in Alberta?
10. What about the group in Corrections?
11. Tell us about experiences participants had in implementing the benchmarks.
12. What is different between those that did this and those that didn't?
13. What is your perspective on the holistic approach and the use of benchmarks?
14. Tell us about the triumphs.
15. How useful were the following methods of supporting the practitioners?
  - The orientation session, the training sessions, the blog, the video conferences, the individual telephone conferences
16. Are all of the modes necessary?
17. Have you used the ARB in your job as a Literacy Coordinator?
18. How applicable are the ARB to the range of programs represented in the Pilot?
19. Tell us your general impressions of the effectiveness of this project.
20. What recommendations have you for training? Resource development and application? Support for implementation? Schedule for implementation?



21. How do you think province-wide implementation of the benchmarks can be facilitated? What specific measures should be planned and used?
22. Should they be implemented?
23. What is implementation (province-wide)?
24. What changes would you make to the ARBs and training?
25. Was the evaluation planned from the beginning?

## APPENDIX G: June 14 Meeting Agenda

### ARB PILOT PROJECT FINAL MEETING

Centre for Family Literacy, Edmonton

June 14, 2013

#### AGENDA

MORNING	8:30	<b>Getting Settled</b>
	8:40	<b>Welcome &amp; Introductions</b>
	9:00	<b>What's in a Word?: A fun introduction to communicate about the ARB</b>
	9:50	<p><b>Program's Experiences with the ARB</b></p> <p>Participants will be given one poster board each and will have about 30' to collate a poster/visual of their experience with the ARB with pictures and other artifacts they will bring from home. Markers, scissors, post it notes, and other craft material will be available for use as well.</p> <p>Questions to guide the work include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How did you use the benchmarks?</li> <li>▪ How were they useful/not useful to you, to your program, to your learners?</li> <li>▪ What were the facilitators/ barriers to implementation?</li> <li>▪ Provide examples of the approaches you used to implement the benchmarks.</li> <li>▪ Which teaching and assessment tools and resources did you use? How effective were they?</li> <li>▪ How did being involved in the Pilot change how you look at your learners, your program? How did it change the program?</li> <li>▪ How has this experience deepened or enhanced your literacy practice?</li> </ul>
	10:20	<b>BREAK</b>
	10:35	Each practitioner will present her/his poster to the rest of the group with opportunities for questions and feedback
	11:45	<b>Recap of Presentations</b>
	12:00	<b>LUNCH</b>
AFTERNOON	12:45	<p><b>If Only We Could!: Designing the Implementation of the Benchmarks</b></p> <p>Working in small groups practitioners will engage in developing recommendations for designing a provincial implementation plan for the ARB</p> <p>Questions to guide the work include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Training:</b> What pieces of training are important to include in the implementation? When should training happen in the process of using ARB? Is there a need for repetition of training? How often? How should training happen to be most effective, most user-friendly?</li> <li>▪ <b>Challenges:</b> What might stop organizations/providers from using the benchmarks? What will help remove the barriers and make the ARB accessible?</li> <li>▪ <b>Supports:</b> What supports need to be in place for the implementation? What form should they take? How can the ARB website be useful for you and for new sites and practitioners?</li> </ul>

	1:45	<b>BREAK</b>
	2:00	Each small group will present its recommendations for implementation
	3:30	<b>Closing</b>
	3:45	<b>Farewells</b>

## APPENDIX H: Documents Reviewed for the Evaluation

### PUBLISHED/OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS

*Alberta Reading Benchmarks Report (2011).* Alberta Government. Retrieved from [http://albertareadingbenchmarks.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/ab\\_reading\\_benchmarks\\_2011\\_document.pdf](http://albertareadingbenchmarks.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/ab_reading_benchmarks_2011_document.pdf) January 10 2013.

*Alberta Reading Benchmarks. History, Resources, Pilot.* Alberta Government. Retrieved from <http://albertareadingbenchmarks.wordpress.com/> January 10 2013.

*Community Adult Learning Program Report to Partners (2010).* Retrieved June 3 2013 from <http://eae.alberta.ca/post-secondary/community/publications.aspx>

This final Report details the process and outcomes, including recommendations and an action plan of the work of the Community Adult Learning Task Team. The team, formed at the request of the Deputy Minister of the Alberta Ministry of Adult Education and Technology was charged with the task of examining and making recommendations on ways to better align the publically-funded post-secondary system and the community adult learning system. The Team formulated a set of Core Values and Principles of Collaboration to serve as a framework for the work of the Comprehensive Community Institutions (CCIs) – (Colleges) and the Community Adult Learning Centres (CALC). The Report makes comprehensive recommendations regarding: Stewardship of the CCIs, the Regional Access Planning Process, Regional Access Advisory Councils and further development of the concept of Community Adult Learning Centres. The document delineates Core Functions and Services and a detailed action plan for implementation of the recommendations.

*Crosby, Pam (2011).* *Reading Benchmarks Support Resources Consultation.* Capacity Consulting Inc.

This consultation was commissioned by a collaborative group consisting of community adult literacy and learning organizations, comprehensive community institutions and the Alberta government who were tasked with creating and implementing the Alberta Reading Benchmarks (ARB). A study was undertaken to determine what curriculum, resources and assessment tools were being. It examined feedback on curriculum resources and assessments that could be used in establishing a guiding framework for the implementation of the ARB. The study involved initial telephone interviews and an on-line survey of 136 individual CALP, VTALP and FLP. Findings revealed a wide range of tools in use, with little consistency between programs. Most of the respondents indicated a preference for a comprehensive Reading Benchmark Tool kit. The following recommendations were stated:

- Continue development of a comprehensive tool kit containing all three elements: curriculum, resources and assessments.
- Benchmark the resources most in use against the new guidelines.
- Develop standardized assessment tools
- Provide on-going and regular training for facilitators.

Given the changing nature of the adult literacy field, the report also called for a structural review of the current adult literacy and learning system.

Eaton, Sarah E. (2011). *What is the International Literacy Skills Survey (IALSS)? A Canadian perspective*. Retrieved December 17 2012 from <http://drsaraheaton.wordpress.com/2011/05/01what-is-the-international-adult-literacy-survey-ials>

This posting provides a quick reference to IALSS and lists the five levels with their descriptions. It also provides a helpful list of references.

Gadsby, L. Middleton, S. and Whitaker, C. (2007). *Monitoring and Assessment in Community-Based Adult Literacy Programs in British Columbia, Phase 1 (Definition and Selection of Benchmarks): A Report to the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education*.

This report outlines the first phase of work undertaken by Literacy BC on behalf of the BC Ministry of Advanced Education. Government was interested in developing and implementing a monitoring and assessment system for CALP programs. The report identifies the many stakeholders in an adult literacy system. It also provides information about the range of literacy competencies: reading, writing, numeracy, information technology, oral communication and participation. Using a values based framework they developed a series of matrices to identify levels of performance. The matrices are laid out by domain and cognitive process and by level. This includes a set of examples to illustrate how the essential competencies within each level can be performed in occupational, personal, community and academic settings. The report also provides a series of recommendation related to the imperative to use a values-based approach, the benchmark system, assessment tools, resources for implementation, the implementation process and integration across the adult literacy sectors.

Kreiner, Monica. (2011). *Aboriginal Adult Reading Literacy Benchmarks Consultation*

This report was commissioned by the Alberta Reading Benchmarks Advisory Committee in order to present the draft ARB to the aboriginal literacy community, obtain information on current curriculum, resources and “best practices” in use and receive feedback on what would be most useful to the community in implementing the ARB. Twenty-five consultations were conducted between February and April 2011 with community-based literacy programs in both urban and rural areas, Indigenous colleges, public colleges and researchers. Best practices (“Wise Practices”) are listed as well as important perspectives that influence aboriginal literacy and general education. Important recommendations are stated:

- That context be considered in the benchmarks.
- That publishers of material and creators of curriculum be informed of the reading benchmarks so that they can rate their material to the benchmarks.
- That the Apprenticeship board be approached regarding the reading benchmarks to determine how they integrate with requirements of apprenticeship entrance.
- That an assessment tool on the reading benchmarks be developed with the following considerations:
  - It must begin with an oral and interactive piece to engage learners at the lowest level and increase confidence;
  - It must include a choice so that people can pick the contexts with which they feel most comfortable.
- That training begin with talking about the underlying philosophy of benchmarking.
- That training opportunities include funding for travel and accommodation.
- That training be followed up using technology solutions to reinforce and continue development of the tools to contexts.

- That when people working in Aboriginal literacy get together for training that they be given the opportunity to develop a community of practice to share wise practices, results from pilot programs, and research knowledge

Norton, Mary (2011). *Approaches to Benchmarks Frameworks for Adult Literacy Programming, a Report prepared for the Alberta Literacy Benchmarks Project.*

This comprehensive report outlines literacy benchmarks that have been implemented in four Canadian provinces as well as in Australia. It provides a detailed context for review, information about the development and implementation of reading benchmarks in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. It lists and compares the strengths and challenges of benchmark frameworks and details numerous and well-presented considerations for developing a literacy benchmark framework in Alberta.

*Provincial/Territorial Adult Literacy Profiles developed through Connecting the Dots: Improving Accountability in the Adult Literacy Field in Canada. The profile for Alberta. (2008).* Retrieved May 23 2013 from <http://centreforliteracy.qc.ca/projects/literacyandaccountability/learn/fieldreview/profiles>

This document provides the first pan-Canadian overview of funding, delivery, and accountability practices in adult literacy services. Each profile offers a “snapshot” of adult literacy funding, services and accountability practices for a specific province or territory. Based on online research of a variety of websites, the information is valid for 2008.

Purcell-Gates, V., Anderson, J., Gagne, M., Jang, K., Lenters, K., and McTavish, M. (2012). *Measuring Situated Literacy Activity : Challenges and Promises. Journal of Literacy Research* 2012 44: 396. Retrieved May 24 2013 from <http://jlr.sagepub.com/content/44/4/396>

**Abstract:** This report presents the results of the development of a methodological approach to provide empirical evidence that family literacy programs “work.” The assessment techniques were developed within the action research project Literacy for Life (LFL) that the authors designed and delivered for 12 months, working collaboratively with three different cohorts of immigrant and refugee families in western Canada. The goal was to develop valid and reliable measures and analyses to measure the impact on literacy skill and knowledge in a particular version of a literacy program that incorporated real-world literacy activities into instruction for low-English-literate adults and their prekindergarten children, ages 3 to 5. The authors offer this approach to assessment as a promising way to measure the impact of socially situated literacy activity that requires taking the social context of literacy activity into account. They offer this work not as the answer to the challenge of documenting the value of working with families and literacy, but as one way to think about focusing curriculum and assessment within programs that validate the real lives of the participants and build bridges between those lives and literacy work within family literacy programming.

## **ARB PILOT PROGRAM DOCUMENTS**

Interim (November 2012) and Final (May 2013) Reports and related documents from each Pilot Site:

Cardinal, V. Blue Quills First Nations College  
Chung, K. and Picknell, T. Centre for Family Literacy  
Fors, L. and Rye, L. Northern Lakes College  
Gagne, S. Provost Adult Learning and Literacy  
Hands, A. Jasper Adult Learning Council  
Holt, C. and Johnson, A. Taber and District Community Adult Learning  
Mantha, J. and Reagan, R. Old Sun Community College

## **PILOT PROGRAM RESOURCES**

ARB Quick Reference Guide  
ARB Resource List  
ARB Aboriginal Resource List  
Read Forward  
Read Forward: Skills Alignment Guide  
Analysis for Benchmarking  
Quick Guide for Benchmarking  
Read Forward: Segment Activities

Pancratz, C. (2012) Pilot Site Information: Pilot Implementation of the Alberta Reading Benchmarks.  
Rhyasen Erdman, C. (2012). Alberta Reading Benchmarks Implementation Pilot. Terms of Reference.  
Rhyasen Erdman, C. (2012). Collecting Feedback from Pilot Sites.  
Rhyasen Erdman, C. (2012). Pilot Site Profile.  
Rhyasen Erdman, C. (2012). 2012-13 Pilot Program Schedule.

## APPENDIX I: Glossary

### Assessment

The action or instance of assessing

Three major types of assessment can be used in conjunction to support student achievement:

1. Assessment for learning is diagnostic and formative for the purposes of greater learning achievement.
2. Assessment as learning is assessment as a process of developing and supporting students' active participation in their own learning.
3. Assessment of learning is assessment for purposes of providing evidence of achievement for reporting.

<http://www.crcs.bc.ca/teacherlinks/for-as-of.html>

### Benchmark

1. a point of reference from which measurements may be made
2. something that serves as a standard by which others may be measured or judged
3. a standardized problem or test that serves as a basis for evaluation or comparison

Merriam Webster Dictionary <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/benchmark>

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/5AAssessmentPractices.pdf>

Assessment for learning	Assessment as learning	Assessment of learning
Assessment for learning is ongoing, diagnostic, and formative. It is for ongoing planning. It is not used for grading and Report Cards.	Assessment as learning actively involves students. It is ongoing, and it involves self and peer assessment. It provides students with the opportunity to use the feedback to improve learning. Allows time for self-edit.	Assessment of learning occurs at end of year or at key stages. It is summative. It is for grading and Report cards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• diagnostic and formative</li><li>• teacher assessment, student self-assessment, and/or student peer assessment</li><li>• criterion-referenced – criteria based on prescribed learning outcomes identified in the provincial</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• self-assessment</li><li>• the development of self-assessment skills</li><li>• peer-assessment</li><li>• the development of peer-assessment skills</li><li>• provides students with information on their own achievement and prompts them to consider how they</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• summative</li><li>• teacher assessment</li><li>• may be either criterion-referenced (based on prescribed learning outcomes) or norm-referenced (comparing student achievement to that of others)</li><li>• information on student</li></ul>



<p>curriculum, reflecting performance in relation to a specific learning task</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• involves both teacher and student in a process of continual reflection and review about progress</li> <li>• teachers adjust their plans and engage in corrective teaching in response to formative assessment</li> </ul>	<p>can continue to improve their learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student-determined criteria based on previous learning and personal learning goals</li> <li>• students use assessment information to make adaptations to their learning process and to develop new understandings</li> <li>• provides the opportunity to respond to assessment feedback to improve a project.</li> </ul>	<p>performance can be shared with parents/guardians, school and district staff, and other education professionals (e.g., for the purposes of curriculum development)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• used to make judgments about students' performance in relation to provincial standards</li> <li>• used for grading and Report Cards</li> </ul>
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<http://www.crcs.bc.ca/teacherlinks/for-as-of.html>

## APPENDIX J: ARB Advisory Committee Membership

The ARB Advisory Committee was composed of the following individuals:

- Audrey Gardner - Coordinator for Research Projects, Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning - Bow Valley College
- Enayat Aminzadah - Executive Director - Community Learning Network
- Janet Lane - Executive Director - Literacy Alberta
- Jonna Grad – Executive Director – Centre for Family Literacy
- Diane Wishart - Manager - Campus Alberta Connections Enterprise and Advanced Education
- Lindsay Manz – Manager - Campus Alberta Connections Enterprise and Advanced Education
- Lindy Fors - Coordinator Adult Basic Education - Northern Lakes College
- Lorraine Molding - LES Specialist - Literacy Alberta
- Michael Fisher - Manager, Community Adult Learning - Campus Alberta Connections Enterprise and Advanced Education
- Sherry Gagne - Executive Director, Provost Adult Learning & Literacy
- Shelley Wells - Team Leader - Literacy and Numeracy, Alberta Human Services
- Tracey Campbell - Senior Policy Analyst - Alberta Human Services

## APPENDIX K: Evaluation Committee Membership

The Evaluation Committee (EC) was composed of the following individuals:

- Audrey Gardner - Bow Valley College – Coordinator for Research Projects, Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning
- Jonna Grad – Executive Director – Centre for Family Literacy
- Janet Lane- Executive Director - Literacy Alberta  
Lorraine Moulding, LES, Literacy Alberta- participated in those meetings that Janet was unable to attend
- Tracey Campbell –Senior Policy Analyst - Alberta Human Services
- Lindsay Manz – Manager, Campus Alberta Connections Enterprise and Advanced Education

To facilitate the communication of information and data collection, most of the meetings were also attended by:

- Corrie Rhyasen-Erdman – Facilitator of the ARB Pilot Project
- Lorene Anderson – Consultant and Trainer for the ARB Pilot Project