

# Tools for Transitions Project

## Notes from Focus Group 1 - May 7, 2013

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6 Respondents, all staff from local adult literacy programs, all verbal responses

### **What gaps or cracks currently exist for learners trying to transition from LBS to employment?**

- Learners are not ready for employment or employment program but they are done with literacy program
- Literacy and Employment Services have two different definitions of “job ready” - need to meet and match up – August meeting?

### **What tools are currently being used to help learners transition to employment? What works about them? What doesn't?**

- Just doing math and English, English books are American Challenger books and will supplement – assessment coming in is camera, going out also do camera which is employment but especially the math portion shows a poor result, not a great assessment tool – rest seems okay but not the math – Port Cares – need an assessment that is way more substantial for math – the placement part does tell you the basics but not much more
- usually then goes to the breakthrough to math placement and asks more questions
- As soon as the students see percentages, they panic
- How relevant is the math assessment to employment – the example with flour, etc. is not pertinent to the workforce, not relevant – calculating % of tip would be more relevant
- Using authentic workforce materials would be better

- Samples included job application form, completing an accident/incident form – anything work related – used many of those forms and the learners enjoyed it because they felt it was true – more than just learning grammar, etc. it was real
- how can you tell that a learner has an employment goal – most ask them, break time encourages conversation and it turns to their career goals, employment plans, see this time as a crucial time in the planning – is also part of the intake process – it also does change as they proceed in the learning
- Not sure about the focus on the grade 12 requirement – why it is required by employers – some are really good at what they do but will never get that qualification or any of the equivalents
- The GED book is very intimidating, most people run when they see it
- MTCU expects a training plan that is always updated, not just created and left alone for a year, etc.
- Completed learning activities are also inputted into the learning plan and then more goals are added
- Would be nice to have a valuation system like credits that are recognized and have value attached
- Would rather have a different type of assessment that evaluates better their abilities when they are going out, that matches the competencies
- When do the clients decide they are ready to go on to employment – Port Cares – if they get to challenger 8 and complete it, that is all that they have for them – it is when they have no money and need to get a job – leave program and go work and then come back again
- How can they go forward if their life is not working well – how do we balance how they get that basic employment and remain in literacy programs too?
- Is the basic philosophy of OW / gov't that any work is good work
- Self-esteem is also a problem – building it up to the point where they can proceed
- Does the definition of employment ready in literacy match the definition of employment ready for employment service providers?

- Intake form used by EO service providers, they believe that it has all of the information that they need
- A couple of other resources coming – new assessment Swagger – will be an information session this fall with Hamilton/Niagara – measures soft skills – can measure but then where do they go to actually gain these skills?
- Sarah Delicate made a good point that EO services have nowhere to send people to gain the soft skills needed for employment
- Disconnect exists between EO services ability to deliver and what the ministry expects them to do
- EO targets encourage them to not go to school but to get job placements – results in another disconnect
- Can put people into jobs but they are not able to maintain those jobs because they do not have the proper skills/abilities
- Social enterprise is becoming the new wave – lots of work but successful and is federal money – we need money from province

### **What types of tools could help learners transition to employment?**

- Better math assessment
- Soft skills assessment that is relevant to employment
- Curriculum and support for the soft skills instruction
- Assessment that links to the milestones/competencies – intake
- Getting everyone in one room and defining what is job ready – EO, literacy and OW
- Labour market information that is relevant and current and local
- Niagara Workforce Planning Board has not been continuing the work that had been done previously and are seeking others to do it for them – possibly we could identify the top 10 jobs in Niagara, steps to achieve it, typical day, video of typical day, web links, as a laminated card, achievable within a short space of time, volunteering to gain skills, link OALCF with jobs that are out there

- Possibly work with Chamber of Commerce to come to LSP meeting/stakeholders meetings – work as a partner – maybe to identify trends – maybe economic development offices, create a connection
- Binders exist related to specific types of employment to help learners prepare for interviews, etc. – are helpful but are very dense with information
- Information about working in the USA – does it exist – connect with Binational Alliance – Arlene White is the ED
- Also create connections with NEXT Niagara – youth focus might have a better handle on labour market trends – does this create a conflict with the EO offices? Do they already do this?
- Fine line with some employment tools i.e. creation of a resume? Should we do that or refer to EO services
- High staff turnover in the EO agencies creates a lack of knowledge/information in the staff that does not support the learner i.e. grammar mistakes in resumes, etc. – if they do not do the job properly then it becomes our job to do it properly for our learners
- Literacy is an essential service necessary for the learner to become self-sustaining – the foundation to build upon – how do we communicate that message
- Gather all of this information and share with EO providers – Literacy Matters poster/information needs to be shared – we are an investment – create a training document to be used for all new staff in EO agencies – maybe use videos/technology (Pinterest) to communicate the message
- Get rid of the word literacy and focus on training/LBS /lifelong (might scare people) – it is about training & development – should we rebrand? Build stronger relationships – Sarah Delicate also touched on this topic – misinformation about what literacy is – need to be proactive
- Need to sell the link between literacy and their employment success – why it is essential – staff meeting presentations? Statistical sell - % of learners who are job ready in 6 months (as an example) – show the

norms for learners moving levels, moving towards being employable  
– extract stats from CAMS to share – use chart at ABEA that shows timelines for a learner, see if we can validate the information for also being relevant in Niagara

- Link with an employer to see what their minimum benchmark is for hiring new staff – could contribute this information to the proposed cards
- Link with OW to add literacy as part of the training programs that already exist – LLN could be the linkage that supports this opportunity and builds up the communications and relationships
- Also pursue ODSP clients as an untapped market
- Training supports for staff
- Also create a specialized training program in each area and share clients that can then have transportation provided to access the programs
- Ask NALD if they have any suggestions on existing models that join employment and literacy
- Even in a poor economy, the targets are the same as in a good economy

**What competencies do you think are the most important to measure on intake? How do these competencies relate to employment goals?**

- Dependent on goals
- Would be helpful if the intake assessment was linked to competencies
- Participants seemed really unclear about how their current assessments matched up with competencies

**What key pieces of information would you need from an initial assessment (i.e., specific background information, goals, preferences, etc.)? What does MTCU require? Do you feel it is important to receive information about employment goals?**

- Initial assessment includes

- Background information
- Goals (TCU goal paths)
- TCU requires goals and some personal information
- Training plan is being revised constantly (almost monthly) - push from ETC to do so
- Employment goals are important to collect at intake to help with training plan – these goals often change over time

### **Would seeing the client's entire pathway be helpful for learner plan development and transitions?**

- Yes, but this doesn't happen
- There was major discrepancies between the amount of time it takes for a client to move levels
- Concern that if an employment staff was to see the pathway and timelines they would not work with literacy because employment staff are under pressure to have clients employed within 12 months

### **Next Steps**

- Send out
  - Timelines for validation to see when learners move on average between levels
  - Survey of types of tools that would be most helpful to develop through this project
  - Literature review
  - Information on how to book learner focus groups