

Making the Most of What is Available

The St. Charles Adult and Continuing Education Centres Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) upgrading program at the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School has responded to the pre-apprenticeship and employment needs in their community by developing partnerships with three organizations: Laborers' International Union of North America (LiUNA) Local 837 and City of Hamilton, Immigrants Working Centre (IWC) and YWCA Hamilton. For all partnerships, the LBS services are provided with core LBS programming only.

1. [Laborers' International Union of North America \(LiUNA\) Local 837](#)

The LiUNA program focuses on the HYIC (Hamilton Youth in Construction) program, specifically in Construction craft and cement finishing. St. Charles recruits youth who have their grade 10 for this program and also provides soft skills training and referrals to Employment Service providers, etc. In the first HYIC class, they could barely recruit 10 people. For the most recent cohort, they interviewed/pre-screened over 50 people (competing for 10 seats) and had to turn many others away. All participants in the program graduated and secured employment.

"As far as success stories, I wish I was able to track down one of the students we sent to LiUNA for the HYIC (Hamilton Youth in Construction) program. SHE was their best student and most successful in the field. She stated it was a life changing experience when we went down to visit the site."

- Luc DiDiomedede, LBS program Co-ordinator, St. Charles Adult & Continuing Education Centres

2. [Immigrants Working Centre \(IWC\)](#)

The IWC provides truck driver training. Many participants complete the training but have difficulty writing the exam because they don't have the math skills they need. St. Charles created a math course based on that occupation. This has been extremely successful, with 4 cohorts so far and another starting in September 2021.

3. [YWCA Hamilton](#)

The YWCA partnership focuses on numeracy upgrading for participants in the women's electrical pre-apprenticeship program who do not have the grade 12 math credentials needed to continue on their goal path. Like the IWC, the YWCA found that participants were completing the program, but couldn't proceed further because they lacked the academic skills in order to pursue further training and secure work. The participants had to go "backwards" and come back to school. Understandably, the participants were very frustrated.

St. Charles provides the training to address the gaps in participants' skills and does pathway programming with them (i.e. LBS - high school credit acquisition - Employment Services). Just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 18 participants were signed up for this extremely successful program. Due to COVID restrictions, the program was delivered online and actually included people from out of the area who wouldn't otherwise have participated. Working on-line in during the pandemic enabled St. Charles LBS to reach out to these learners in ways that they had not previously implemented.

St. Charles also helps with recruitment for the programs at IWC and YWCA by allowing various partner organizations to come and speak to their general student population about opportunities.

Recommendations from Luc DiDiomedede:

- a) Organizations offering training programs should make LBS part of their proposals from the beginning, to provide support and help these potential apprentices to be successful in achieving their goal and securing gainful employment in their chosen field.
- b) Ensure every pre-apprenticeship or similar training program include a checklist of requirements needed for the trade, e.g., grade 12 math
- c) As a group, LBS providers need to get out in the community to spread the word about what LBS can offer and how LBS can support other training programs, including departments in your own organisation. LBS is the connector and conduit to the other programs