

COLLEGE MATTERS

LBSCSC

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Newsletter of the Literacy and Basic Skills College Sector Committee

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

It was a great pleasure to see so many of you again and to meet new LBS people at the November 9 and 10 provincial meeting. It was especially rewarding to hear so much positive feedback about the first edition of "College Matters". That edition focused on establishing communication links; this edition will provide information about some national and provincial projects and initiatives which will help college programs implement the learning outcomes. MET will be providing a more complete list by the end of March.

There is no doubt that implementing the learning outcomes is very challenging for individual programs, but it is important to remember that all programs in

all sectors are facing the same challenges, and there is a great deal we can learn from each other. MET is providing additional formal support by funding information bulletins, assessment and learning outcomes training, assessment consultants and developmental projects. Informal support is available through the Alpha discussion groups and the College Sector Committee. If you have a question or you've thought of an interesting solution, contact me at "College Matters", and I'll try and find the answer or circulate your suggestion.

CROSS SECTORAL DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

The College, School Board, Community-Based and Laubach umbrella groups have each received funding to develop and field test learning outcomes demonstrations. The Laubach and community-based projects will concentrate on LBS levels 1 and 2; the school board and college projects will focus on LBS levels 3 to 5. An important requirement of each of these projects is that the staff involved work closely with each other and build on the guidelines established by the Provincial Training in Common Assessment project. The college proposal includes a commitment to formalize the cross sectoral communication link, to co-ordinate activities with the What Counts as Evidence and

St Lawrence Model Development projects and to report progress regularly to all practitioners.

The executive coordinators of each of the umbrella groups have met once to determine the broad outline of the projects. A second meeting is planned for mid February with MET to determine the specifics of each project. Robyn Cook is already in place for Laubach Literacy and CLO is currently advertising for the staff person on Alpha. A job posting will be distributed for the college sector position once the cross sectoral meeting has been held.



ST LAWRENCE MODEL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

A learning outcomes based model for instructional delivery requires curriculum and behavioural changes, often within institutional environments which are not learning outcomes friendly. St. Lawrence College is being funded to identify how we can demonstrate learning in a learning outcomes environment and the support required by the administrative part of the organization.

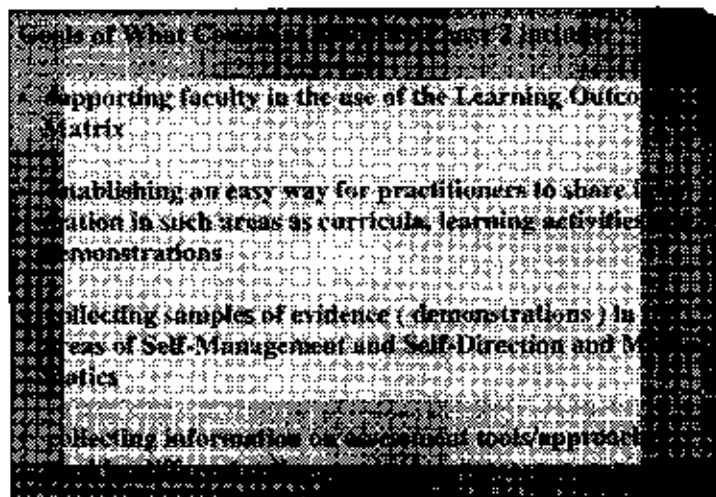
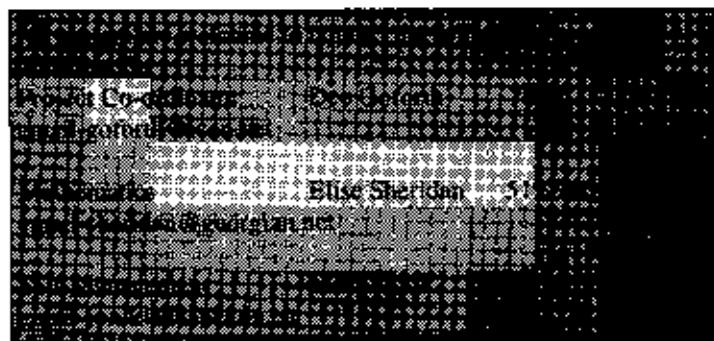
If there are major disconnects between the program and the organization or the program and government, this project will identify opportunities for improvement.

WHAT COUNTS AS EVIDENCE-Phase 2 begins



The past year has been one of major transition for colleges in their attempt to implement a learning outcomes approach. In 1999, it is anticipated that the new Learning Outcomes

Validation Draft (Matrix) will present further structural, assessment and curriculum challenges. College practitioners have expressed a strong need to begin sharing information on assessment approaches, resources and experiences. To respond to these challenges, work on Phase 2 of What Counts as Evidence has been initiated in the areas of Self-Management and Self-Direction, and Mathematics.



Colleges will be contacted in the next few weeks for the purpose of gathering preliminary data and identifying practitioners interested in further participation.



PROVINCIAL TRAINING IN COMMON ASSESSMENT



The Ontario Literacy Coalition is managing this phase project. College representatives on the cross sectoral reference group are Mary Jonik (Cambrian) and Judy Bernstein (Algonquin). The group has met three times to develop a shared understanding of how the Matrix can be used as the basis for assessment, to link with other training and project initiatives, and to decide on the training content and delivery.

understanding of how the Matrix can be used as the basis for assessment, to link with other training and project initiatives, and to decide on the training content and delivery.

Phase one is a series of regional training events from March and April, 1999. Three people per LBS agency will be able to attend. The target audience is administrators and front line staff responsible for assessment. Training will include assessment theory and terminology, introduction to hands-on experience with the use of a scoring rubric for reading and writing (with rubrics for numeracy and speaking and listening to follow) at each level, and hands on experience developing quality demonstrations.

LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT RESOURCE COORDINATORS

This project, also managed by the OLC, will provide each region with a Learning Outcomes and Assessment Resource Coordinator between March and June 1999. The goals of the project are to provide intensive support to programs in the form of information, advice, training and resources and to gather and distribute emerging best practice and management on implementation.



deadlines are advertised on AlphaPlus and have been distributed to all programs. OLC will contract the services of people working in the field from March 1 to the end of June. This is an excellent professional development opportunity.

For further information contact:

Five people will be hired - one for each region and a team leader. Personnel from each sector (college, school board and community-based) will be contracted. The job descriptions and hiring

TOWES

In the December distribution of the November 9 and 10 meeting notes, I included information about the TOWES project. This is a national initiative for which *SkillPlan* in British Columbia has been funded by NLS to develop an assessment tool to measure essential skills in workplace settings.

In January, Cambrian College participated in the project by testing 19 students. The instructions to the test administrators and the test takers were very clear making it a very positive experience. Most of the participants felt that it was exciting to be part of a project that people from across Canada were participating in that also could have a big impact on future workplace assessment.

CROSSING THE RUBRICON

As a former English teacher, the development of the language intrigues me. I watch with interest the emergence of new words especially those designed to explain what we do in education.

Rubric is definitely the new educational word to watch.

It is a noun; can be an adjective (rubrical or rubricated), or a verb (rubricate). A rubrican is an expert in rubrics. (We'll all qualify by the year 2000.) It comes from the Latin ruber - red. (Hence highlights and headings in this newsletter are in red.) Originally it meant 1. A title, heading, direction in a manuscript or book written or printed in red or 2. A direction for the conduct of divine service or the administration of the sacraments, inserted in liturgical books. A third meaning (and this is the one which seems to have caught on) is any heading, rule, or guide.

The Ontario College Sector has been asked by *SkillPlan* to continue its involvement in the next phase of testing due to begin in March 1999. The colleges that participate benefit by participating in a ground-breaking national orientation to skill testing for the workplace. The actual test takers benefit by being involved in a project of this magnitude, in addition to, receiving a unique pen with a highlighter attached.

There will be more about this project and how colleges can use the product in future newsletters.



Work is currently being done to develop a number of rubrics which will serve as guides to determine if a learner has successfully demonstrated completion of an outcome. (Does this spell the end for benchmarks???)

Continuing the Roman theme, the Rubicon is a point or decision from which one can not turn back. Somehow it seems appropriate to combine these two Roman references and name 1999-2000 as the year when we'll all be " Crossing the Rubicon ". If you have other educational words that irritate, amaze or intrigue you let me know. Some of my other educational favorites are matrix or Matrix, transparent, portable and sweatering.. By the way - are you all "ramping up " for Y2K?

LEARNING OUTCOMES TRAINING AND VIDEO



All programs should have now received the Getting Started Working with Learning Outcomes video. The video comes with an explanation of how it might be used and an evaluation form that asks people questions

about its usefulness. It is divided into 3 modules: goal directed assessment, using demonstrations and tracking progress. It is another way to provide consistent training to all practitioners in the province, to increase understanding about learning outcomes and to stimulate informed discussion.

CANADIAN ADULT READING ASSESSMENT (CARA)

The intent of this project is to develop an informal reading inventory (IRI) to be used by adult literacy educators across Canada. The project also includes a training package in print and CD format for test administrators. An IRI is a diagnostic instrument that allows educators to make structured observations of an adult's oral and silent reading performance. In addition to identifying the student's grade level for placement in reading materials, it also provides diagnostic data on how the student processes print (word identification) and text (comprehension).



Based on feedback from focus groups of adult literacy students across Canada, narrative and factual passages geared to adult interests and Canadian in content were written for students at each of nine levels corresponding to a range of traditional grade levels from grades 1 to 12. The passages and comprehension questions used to diagnose comprehension strengths and weaknesses have been field tested across Canada. Further field testing of 500 Ontario urban and rural learners will take place from March until May, 1999. The College sector is assisting this Alberta based project with this phase.

To determine the need for a Canadian informal reading inventory, a national survey on reading assessment was conducted in February, 1997. A total of 55 % respondents described the strengths and limitations of the reading tests they were using. The respondents' comments indicated that they were extremely support a Canadian informal reading inventory.

The Canadian informal reading inventory has the potential to become a key accountability measure for student progress by measuring not only gains in grade level, but also changes in types of strategies the student uses. It will provide more appropriate initial placement as well as facilitate faster gains by literacy students.

