

THE EASTERN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR ADULT EDUCATION
(EASTERN RPAAE)



PHASE THREE

JULY 2019

EXECUTION: CASE STUDIES
OF INNOVATIVE ADULT
EDUCATION PROJECTS
IN THE EASTERN
ONTARIO REGION

REPORT BY:

DR. LORRAINE GODDEN, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
DR. SANDY YOUMANS, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY



The Eastern Regional Partnership of Adult Education (ERP AE) gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Province of Ontario.

Note: The views expressed in this report are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province of Ontario.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
AUTHORS	3
INTRODUCTION	4
BACKGROUND	4
THE EASTERN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR ADULT EDUCATION (ERPAE)	6
ERPAE PHASE 1, 2016-2017: AWARENESS	7
ERPAE PHASE 2, 2017-2018: CAPACITY BUILDING	8
ERPAE PHASE 3, 2018-2019: EXECUTION	9
BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH	10
CASE STUDIES OF THE INNOVATIVE BEST PRACTICE PILOT PROJECTS	12
CASE STUDY ONE: ALGONQUIN AND LAKESHORE CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	13
CASE STUDY TWO: CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF EASTERN ONTARIO	16
CASE STUDY THREE: HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	22
CASE STUDY FOUR: LIMESTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	29
CASE STUDY FIVE: OTTAWA CARLETON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	33
CASE STUDY SIX: OTTAWA CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD	37
CASE STUDY SEVEN: RENFREW COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	43
CASE STUDY EIGHT: UPPER CANADA DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	47
SUMMARY OF THE INNOVATIVE BEST PRACTICE PILOT PROJECTS	56
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER	60
REFERENCES	63



THE EASTERN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR ADULT EDUCATION (EASTERN RPAE)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 2018-2019 school year, the Eastern Regional Partnership for Adult Education (ERPAE) developed and implemented diverse innovative best practice projects to support the educational outcomes of adult learners. Eight participating ERPAE school boards each self-selected a focus for their project related to their board’s Adult Education (AE) priorities and one of the four Ontario Ministry of Education Adult Education Strategy (AES) mandates (i.e., Intake, Assessment, and Referral; Guidance and Pathway Planning; Prior Learning Recognition and Assessment (PLAR); Flexible Delivery) or a fifth regionally established mandate about the Positioning of Adult Education. The ERPAE established a structured approach to project execution that included:

- project proposal submission and feedback to improve the proposed project
- consultation with researchers to refine research questions and discuss data collection methods that would be used to determine the effectiveness of the project
- the submission of a project report with specific requirements
- presentation of the project to ERPAE members to contribute to shared knowledge of AE best practices

This structure provided support and accountability for school boards in project development and implementation. Together, ERPAE projects addressed all four AES mandates and a fifth regional mandate. The projects, identified by mandate, were as follows:

- Intake, Assessment, and Referral (1 project)– creating an online registration system for adult learners
- Guidance and Pathway Planning (1 project) – developing a pathway/service planning document for adult learners

- Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR; 1 project) – improving PLAR by making students aware of PLAR upon registration, offering PLAR assessments online, and the development of a Senior PLAR student survey to identify potential work and life experiences for credit equivalencies
- Flexible Delivery (2 projects) – partnering with community organizations to offer AE programs at accessible rural locations and working with eligible parents involved in a parent engagement in math project to earn their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)
- Positioning of Adult Education (3 projects) – partnering with a professional marketing agency to develop a social media campaign, raising school board awareness about AE programs through school presentations, and developing a community partner referral resource

This report includes detailed case studies of each school board’s innovative best practice project. The majority of school boards collected data to document the effectiveness of their projects. In some cases, boards are still in the process of collecting and analyzing their data because of time constraints they experienced. Case studies are intended to provide guidance to colleagues who aspire to undertake similar projects and to inspire further innovation in the field of Adult Education. Ultimately, the execution of innovative pilot projects by the ERPAE aligns with the AES by building greater capacity and collaboration within the ERPAE and promoting higher quality AE programs to meet the diverse needs of adult learners.

The focus of the ERPAE’s valuable work can be best summarized in the following conceptual model, A Visual Conceptualization of ACE in the ERPAE. The four mandates outlined in the AES are at the centre of this visualization, acknowledging their fundamental role in ACE provision, programing, and delivery. Placed around these mandates are four AE theoretical



foundations: the positioning of ACE (the fifth regionally established mandate), what ACE does, how ACE works, and how ACE is delivered. Framing and underpinning all of the mandates are the values held by the ERPAAE members. These values were determined early in the ERPAAE's work together (see Youmans, Godden, & Hummell, 2017) and they remain at the heart of ACE, guiding the ERPAAE's collective pursuit of providing effective and efficient programs to support the educational and life outcomes of all adult learners.

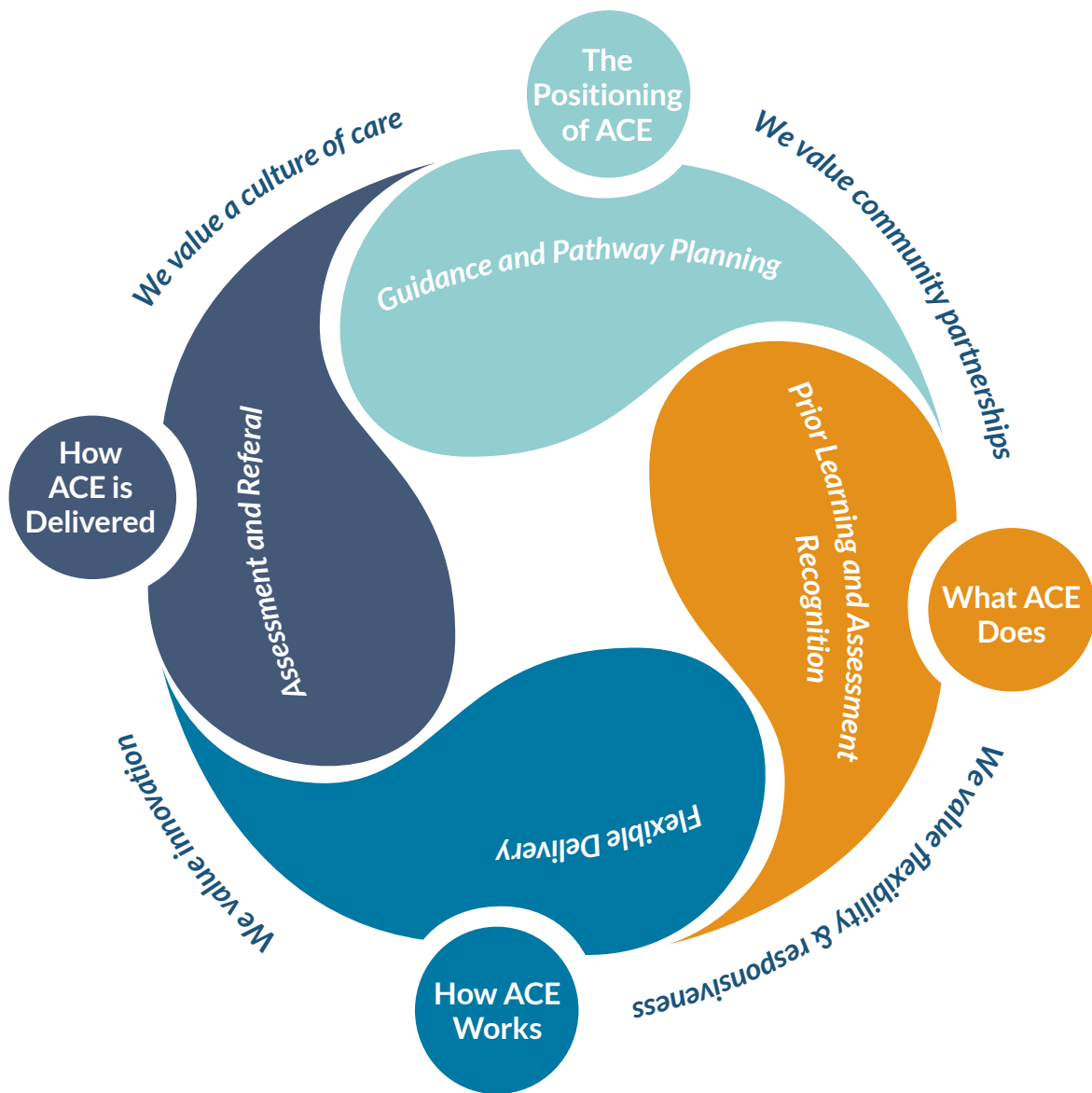


IMAGE 2: A VISUAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ACE IN THE ERPAAE

AUTHORS



Dr. Godden is an adjunct professor and educational researcher at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University. Dr. Godden's research is rooted in understanding how educators interpret policy and curriculum to make sense of career and life planning, work-integrated-learning, adult learning, and other educational multidisciplinary and public policies. Dr. Godden's research has been published in national and international journals and conferences, and she has successfully completed many collaborative, empirical, and community-based research projects that have informed theory, policy, and practice-based initiatives. Dr. Godden currently serves on the Board of Directors of CERIC and the Asia Pacific Career Development Association.



Dr. Youmans is an adjunct professor and educational researcher at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University. She is passionate about promoting high quality teaching and learning experiences to support student success. Her Early Years research is informed by her experiences as a kindergarten/primary teacher and mother of three. Dr. Youmans was the Project Manager of the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten program commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) for two years. She was also the Project Manager and Lead Author for the Curriculum Review for Social Studies and Geography commissioned by the OME.



INTRODUCTION

This report describes the activities undertaken by the Eastern Regional Partnership for Adult Education (ERPAE) during 2018-2019, the final year of a three-year long Ontario Government funded Adult Education Strategy (AES). The purpose of the AES was the promotion of a regional and more collaborative approach among school boards to foster a shared responsibility for adult learning that would improve learner outcomes. The ERPAE, one of seven regional partnerships, received provisional funds from the Province to support their regional strategic program objectives, pending the terms and conditions set out under Ontario Transfer Payment RPAE Agreements. The strength of the collaboration across the ERPAE, as they have enthusiastically worked to successfully implement the AES strategy, is highlighted in the report. During Year 3 of the AES, eight school boards in the ERPAE each developed and piloted an innovative project to support one of the four AES mandates or a fifth regionally established mandate. The intention of the projects was to improve Adult Education (AE) programs and practices to facilitate the educational outcomes of adult learners.

“There is a great diversity of needs, abilities, backgrounds, and aspirations among the population participating in adult education programming today, as well as among those who might benefit but are not yet enrolled in adult education programs.” (Government of Ontario, 2017, p. 9)

BACKGROUND

In *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education*, the Ontario Ministry of Education included the commitment to “ensure that the adult education system better supports adult learners in their efforts to finish high school and successfully transition to postsecondary education, training or the workplace.” The AES strategy provided an opportunity to explore innovative ways to re-engage adult learners and build district school board capacity to better assist adult learners in achieving their goals. The three overarching objectives of the Ministry of Education Adult Education Strategy were as follows:

- (1) Promote a regional and more collaborative approach among school boards to foster a shared responsibility for adult learning that will improve accountability for learner outcomes.
- (2) Ensure availability of a wide range of accessible program delivery options and supports that are responsive to adult learner needs.
- (3) Improve the transitions for learners between Ministry of Education adult credit programs and programs funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (previously called the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development) and the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

The seven Regional Partnerships for Adult Education (RPAEs), which include six regional English-language partnerships and one province-wide French-language partnership, were to promote a regional and more collaborative approach among school boards to improve adult learner outcomes. Each partnership received provisional funds from the Province to support their regional strategic program objectives, pending the terms and conditions set out under Ontario Transfer Payment RPAE Agreements.

The four key mandates outlined in the Ministry of Education Adult Education Strategy were:

- (1) Regionally coordinated access to flexible delivery of EDU Adult and Continuing Education programs and/or services (e.g., e-learning or hybrid delivery programs) that best meet adult learner needs.
- (2) Access to coordinated information, intake, assessment, and referrals at school boards to ensure learners are directed to the program or service that best meets their needs.
- (3) Regionally coordinated access to consistent Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for Mature Students working towards a high school diploma.
- (4) Regional guidance, career counselling and pathway planning for mature students working towards a high school diploma or seeking prerequisites for postsecondary education.

Based on the results of an environmental scan of the AE programs offered in the eastern region (Youmans, Godden, & Hummell, 2017), as well as feedback received from Board representatives and stakeholders who participated in planning group sessions and interviews, a fifth mandate was added to the ERPAE Strategic Plan. The fifth mandate was the enhanced positioning of adult education by building community and region wide awareness of Adult and Continuing Education programs.



THE EASTERN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR ADULT EDUCATION (ERPAE)



Image 1. ERPAE District School Board Project Participants

As articulated in the Terms of Reference for the ERPAE, the following guidelines underpinned the regional partnership's focus on developing a culture of collegiality and shared responsibility:

- The regional partnership would advance the Ministry's goal for Adult Education in Ontario through existing authority and accountability structures;
- This effort would not stipulate changes to service delivery models;
- Member school boards within the partnership would strive to identify, acknowledge, and apply the partnership's full range of capabilities within the region to improve their productivity and value to adult learners;
- Member school boards would not engage in activities that would disenfranchise another school board's adult education program; and
- Disputes pertaining to adult education would be resolved through documented consensus of member school boards.

The role of the Eastern RPAE was to provide leadership to promote a regional and more collaborative approach among member school boards to the provision of Ministry of Education adult education programs and services, that:

- fostered a shared responsibility for adult learning;
- improved accountability for learner outcomes;
- identified and addressed gaps and opportunities; and
- ensured availability of a wide range of accessible program delivery options and supports that addressed the needs of adult learners.

As it responded to the Ministry of Education Adult Education Strategy, the ERPAE defined its mission, vision, and established a set of core values which served to provide an essential guiding framework for its collaborative activities.

OUR MISSION: To empower and support adult learners in obtaining an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) and/or successfully transitioning to a chosen pathway; post-secondary education, training, or the workplace.

OUR VISION: To be recognized as a local, provincial and global leader in the coordination and provision of flexible, innovative and responsive adult education programs and services.

The ERPAE values the following:

- (1) A culture of care, rooted within a holistic approach to learning.
- (2) Diverse learners, with unique qualities.
- (3) Flexible approaches, to support learning.
- (4) Provision of service, within local communities.
- (5) Community partnerships, that enhance service.
- (6) Pathway planning to support the acquisition of an OSSD and/or successful transitions.
- (7) Innovation and creativity, that facilitate continuous improvement.

ERPAE PHASE 1, 2016-2017: AWARENESS

During the first year (2016-2017) of the three-year project, the ERPAE completed the following deliverables.

PHASE ONE, PART A: Established a collaborative network of school boards within the region that acted to coordinate its member activities that were related to the Ministry of Education Adult Education Strategy.

PHASE ONE, PART B: Conducted a regional environmental scan that identified opportunities for innovation and collaboration, as well as programming and service gaps, in the delivery of Ministry of Education Adult Education programs and services. The results of this work are documented in the report *An Environmental Scan of Adult and Continuing Education in the Eastern Ontario Region* (Youmans, Godden, & Hummell, 2017a).

PHASE ONE, PART C: Developed a multi-year regional strategic plan based on the outcomes of the regional environmental scan, to direct activities that would promote progress in the four key areas in scope, with key milestones and provision for ongoing evaluation and monitoring. Full details are documented in the ERPAE Strategic Plan 2017-2019 (Youmans, Godden, & Hummell, 2017b).



THE ERPAE STRATEGIC PLAN

Our Multi-Year Strategic Plan was referred to as ACE and it had three Phases:

Phase 1, 2016-17.... **Awareness** – Creation of a regional partnership, completion of an environmental scan report and development of a multi-year strategic plan.

Phase 2, 2017-18.... **Capacity Building** – Continuation of learning from within and outside our region. Sharing and developing innovative best practices.

Phase 3, 2018-19.... **Execution** – Implementation of innovative best practices. Monitoring the impact of implementation.

ERPAE PHASE 2, 2017-2018: CAPACITY BUILDING

Many Ontarians, both unemployed and employed, would benefit from the opportunity to upgrade skills that are foundational to their success, including language, literacy, numeracy, and digital skills.

(Minister of Industry, 2013)

The Phase Two (2017-2018): Capacity Building stage of the EDU Adult Education Strategy was purposefully structured to build upon the collaboration that had been built in Phase One (2016-2017) of the project. The overarching goal of Phase Two was to provide a structure and series of facilitative processes and activities that would support the ERPAE group members by building their capacity in preparation for the Phase Three (2018-2019) Execution of the project, the final implementation of a series of innovative best practices. In order to achieve this, it was important to provide a setting that facilitated both capacity building and professional development activities for all ERPAE group members. The Working Table on Teacher Development (2007) in Ontario identified five characteristics of effective educator professional development, namely that it must be: coherent; attentive to adult learning styles; goal-oriented; sustainable; and evidence-informed. We endeavoured to embed these principles into the planning and structure of the capacity building sessions throughout the year long phase. The results of this process are documented in the report Phase Two: Capacity Building Affirming, Learning, and Yearning: Sharing and Developing Innovative Best Practices Within and Outside of the ERPAE Region (Godden, Youmans, & Hummell, 2018).

ERPAAE PHASE 3, 2018-2019: EXECUTION

The Phase 3 (2018-2019) Execution stage of the EDU Adult Education Strategy was purposefully structured to build upon the collaboration that had been built in Phase 2 (2017-2018) of the project. The overarching goal for the final year of this project was to provide a series of facilitative processes to support ERPAAE group members as they executed their innovative projects. The year's activities were outlined as follows:

- The ERPAAE released a memorandum about the 2018-19 Innovative Best Practice Proposals and timelines were discussed with ERPAAE member board principals and vice-principals,
- Each of the member boards was advised by the Project Coordinator of the processes required to submit the 2018-19 Innovative Best Practice Proposals,
- Boards created their Innovative Best Practice Proposals based upon the needs of their board and adult learners,
- Boards submitted their 2018-19 Innovative Best Practice Proposals to the ERPAAE Project Coordinator and the ERPAAE Table Representatives reviewed each of the submitted proposals and provided feedback on each board proposal,
- Each of the ERPAAE member boards received an individual email from ERPAAE Project Coordinator detailing feedback on their proposal and the approved budget amount,
- Each of the ERPAAE member boards' implementation teams received training on research questions and data collection methods from the project research team,
- The project research team and Project Coordinator met on location with each board team during the initial project execution period to support project implementation,
- The project research team and project Coordinator held further visits and conference calls with each Board, as needed, during the execution period to further support project implementation,
- The boards executed their Innovative Best Practice Projects, evaluating throughout, and
- Each board shared its experiences of implementing the Innovative Best Practice Project during presentations to the ERPAAE members towards the end of the implementation period.

Consequently, the 2018 to 2019 execution phase of the AES for the ERPAAE was structured to provide the participating district school boards with an opportunity to reflect upon and hone their Innovative Best Practice Projects and gather information to evaluate their implementation. This purposeful structure was considered crucial for further developing capacity within the ERPAAE.

“Innovation drives productivity; it drives growth; and it drives living standards.” (The Government of Canada, 2019, p. 9)



BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH

ERPAAE members were provided with a structured approach to gathering information through the implementation of the Innovative Best Practice Projects in order to evaluate the usefulness and effectiveness of the project. The ERPAAE research team was keen to provide the ERPAAE members with an opportunity to develop their own research skills which they could then use as applied, indispensable processes to evaluate future innovative projects. The research team subsequently introduced the ERPAAE members to action research.

Action research is one form of applied research that is an attempt to “study a real school situation with a view to improve the quality of actions and results within it” (Schmuck, 1997, p. 28). Action research can draw upon a range of designs and methodologies, and it can provide educators with an opportunity to examine a practical problem within its educational setting. Action research provides educators with a systematic process to consider options, reflect, implement, and evaluate options (The Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2000). Ultimately, action research is a valuable form of inquiry for educators because it is:

PRACTICAL: Practical improvements are the focus,

PARTICIPATIVE: Teachers, administrators, teacher assistants, students, and parents can all be involved in meaningful ways,

EMPOWERING: All participants can contribute to and benefit from the process,

INTERPRETIVE: Meaning is constructed using participants’ multiple realities in the situation,

TENTATIVE: There are not always right or wrong answers; rather, there are possible solutions based upon multiple viewpoints, and

CRITICAL: Participants look critically at specific problems and act as self-critical change agents.

Given that school board teams were each responsible for developing and implementing their own project, they were encouraged to inquire about the need for research ethics clearance within their own board. From our work in Phase One and Two of the project, the ERPAAE had worked collectively to determine what constituted appropriate collaborate relationships and these were succinctly defined in the ERPAAE vision, mission, and values statements, outlined at the beginning of this report. Importantly, these shaped the ethical approach to conducting the action research of the Innovative Best Practice Projects in the following ways:

ETHICS OF HOPE: The Innovative Best Practice Projects were motivated by making Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) more effective and beneficial for adult learners. The action research was informed by a concern for the broad and diverse range of needs of adult learners and the ACE community, and the hope that worthwhile improvements would be an outcome.

ETHICS OF CARING: Though the aim for all boards was the successful execution of their project, the general welfare of all adult learners and the need for a culture of care was kept at the forefront of how the projects were designed and implemented.

ETHICS OF TRANSPARENCY: Action research can unintentionally create insiders and outsiders within a project. The way that data was collected and shared was made clear to educators and adult learner participants in each Innovative Best Practice Project, and the ERPAAE member partners.

ETHICS OF RESPONSIBILITY: All ERPAE members were committed to principled action through the execution of Phase 3 of the AES. The paramount welfare of adult learners, the collaboration between project participants, evaluation and tracking of project outcomes, and ensuring the transparency of planning and decision-making by all ERPAE members were the principles that underpinned the implementation of the ERPAE Phase 3, 2018-2019: Execution stage of the AES.

In Phase 2: Capacity Building (2017-2018), efforts were purposefully made to implement strategies for encouraging the continuation of learning from within and outside the ERPAE region, through a process of sharing and developing best practices through the ERPAE collaborative network. Organizations often rely on the work of teams to execute complex tasks that require a range of expertise and experiences. Subsequently, in Phase 3 (2018-2019) of the AES, it was important for the regional partnership learning gained through the Year 2 ERPAE capacity building sessions to be applied in practical ways through the innovative best practice pilot projects. In addition, a structured approach to the execution of Phase Three of the AES developed by the Project Coordinator and research team ensured accountability and support for the implementation and sharing of innovative pilot projects by school boards with the region.

“People and skills drive progress along the innovation continuum and are the pipeline that enables every aspect of innovation and growth.”

(Government of Canada, 2019, p. 10)



CASE STUDIES OF THE INNOVATIVE BEST PRACTICE PILOT PROJECTS

The eight participating district school board members of the ERPAE undertook Innovative Best Practice Pilot Projects in relation to the four AES mandate areas and a fifth regionally developed mandate. Three of the district school boards implemented innovative projects related to the regional mandate about the positioning of adult education, two school boards worked on flexible delivery projects, one board focused on improving PLAR, one board targeted guidance and pathway planning, and one board augmented their intake, assessment and referral process (see Table 1). Together, the ERPAE executed pilot projects in each of the four AES mandates and the one regionally developed mandate.

In the next section of this report, we present the eight case studies that were completed during ERPAE Phase 3, 2018-2019 Execution stage of the project. Each of the case studies are quite different in topics and approaches to the mandates because participating district school boards self-selected an AES (or regional) mandate to focus on improving that aligned with their adult education goals and priorities. This was reflective of the diversity of AES provision highlighted in the ERPAE Phase 1, 2016-2017: Awareness phase of the AES, through the environmental scan (Youmans, Godden, & Hummell, 2017). Case studies are presented in alphabetical order by school board name.

TABLE 1: ERPAE INNOVATIVE PILOT PROJECTS BY ADULT EDUCATION STRATEGY (AES) MANDATES

BOARD	INTAKE, ASSESSMENT, AND REFERRAL	GUIDANCE AND PATHWAY PLANNING	PLAR	FLEXIBLE DELIVERY	POSITIONING OF ADULT EDUCATION
ALCDSB					
CDSBEO					
HPEDSB					
LDSB					
OCSB					
OCDSB					
RCDSB					
UCDSB					

CASE STUDY ONE: ALGONQUIN AND LAKESHORE CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



INTRODUCTION

This case study describes a partnership that Loyola School of Adult and Continuing Education in the Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board (ALCDSB) formed with a professional marketing agency to build community awareness of their programs.

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD AND ADULT EDUCATION CONTEXT

ALCDSB is situated in the western portions of Eastern Ontario, including Napanee, Kingston, Belleville and Quinte West. Loyola, the School of Adult and Continuing Education within ALCDSB serves adult learners (age 18+) from the greater Kingston, Napanee, Belleville, Trenton, and Picton areas. Each of the five Loyola campuses provide a safe, welcoming and supportive learning environment for the adult student where they can earn their high school diploma, do academic upgrading, or take English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Qualified guidance counselors at each campus provide educational and career counseling, and maturity assessments. Registration for secondary school courses occurs every six weeks and can be completed either in-class or through e-learning. ESL language programs are available at the Kingston and Belleville campuses, during the day and evening.

PARTNERING WITH A PROFESSIONAL MARKETING COMPANY PROJECT

Many people are unaware that local school boards offer Adult and Continuing Education programs (at little or no cost) in their communities to help adults earn an Ontario Secondary School diploma, upgrade their marks, obtain pre-requisites for post-secondary education, and develop skills (e.g., language, computer, literacy). The Loyola School of Adult and Continuing Education partnered with Tangent MTW Inc., a professional marketing company, to design an advertising campaign to increase awareness of their programs. The focus of the campaign was using social media advertising (e.g., website and Facebook) to make prospective adult learners aware of Loyola's day school credit program. To determine the impact of the campaign, Loyola tracked website traffic and student registration numbers before the campaign was implemented and then after implementation.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Loyola staff used the following research question to guide their project:

Will a professional marketing campaign focused on social media increase the number of student registrations for the day school credit program at Loyola?



PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Loyola staff began tracking day school credit program registration data in January until February 27 as pre-implementation data. The marketing campaign was launched the first week of March after a plan was created in consultation with Tangent regarding the target market and advertising methods. Initial post-implementation data was collected three weeks after the marketing campaign was launched.

MARKETING CAMPAIGN PLAN – MAKE LOYOLA YOUR TICKET TO SUCCESS

Loyola is committed to helping adult learners achieve success by earning a high school diploma, doing academic upgrading, or taking ESL classes. As one of the former student’s testimonials stated, “Loyola has been my ticket to success.”

Accordingly, Tangent proposed the idea of “ticket to success” as a basis for a campaign slogan. Tangent liked that the slogan was open-ended so that it could be used for different ads. For example, “Make Loyola your ticket to a higher income” and “Make Loyola your ticket to a better future”. Ultimately, Loyola is positioned as the means to achieve the desired goal.

The other great thing about this slogan is that it can utilize the image of a ticket to help with recall and recognition of Loyola.

DATA COLLECTED

To determine the effectiveness of the marketing campaign, the Loyola team tracked website data and student registration pre- and post-implementation. They found that there was a significant increase in website traffic and submitted inquiry questions from the school website. Numbers jumped from an average inquiry submission of 5 to 26 during the first week of implementation. It will take some time to determine registration number impact as it is not clear if the campaign has driven more students to complete registration at this time. In the past, roughly 55% of registrants reported that they heard about Loyola from friends, another 15% from Ontario Works and the remaining 30% from a combination of partner agencies, internet, advertising, etc. After three weeks of the marketing campaign implementation, these numbers changed slightly as website jumped to 20% of new registrations, although “Word of Mouth” is still the most common - 50%.

Here are some social media images that were developed by Tangent:



SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING CAMPAIGN PROJECT RESULTS

Given that initial data was collected only three weeks after the marketing campaign was launched, more time is needed to collect data and analyze results. Loyola will collect more website traffic and student registration data in June, once the marketing campaign has been more fully implemented. At that time, firmer conclusions can be drawn about the effectiveness of this particular social media marketing campaign.

SUSTAINABILITY OF A MARKETING CAMPAIGN PROJECT

Adult and Continuing Education marketing campaigns can be a good investment that generate revenue through greater student enrolment. It would be helpful for Adult and Continuing Education programs to be allocated a marketing budget. With a marketing budget in place, marketing campaigns would be sustainable for Adult and Continuing Education programs.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

The key lessons learned by Loyola staff were:

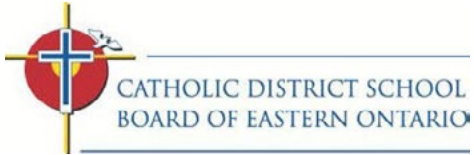
- It is beneficial to have a focused marketing campaign with defined goals and the support of a professional agency.
- Tracking website traffic and student registration information is key in determining the success of a marketing strategy.

MARKETING CAMPAIGN ADVICE FOR OTHER BOARDS

Investing in a short-term marketing plan with a professional agency is beneficial for gaining insight into strategies that may work for your organization. Since most Adult and Continuing Education staff are not marketing experts, partnering with a professional marketing agency is valuable. To justify the need for a marketing budget, it is important to track website traffic and student registration data to demonstrate how it helps generate program interest and revenue.



CASE STUDY TWO: CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF EASTERN ONTARIO



INTRODUCTION

This case study describes how staff at The School of Alternative and Continuing Education (St. James Catholic Education Centre) in the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO) raised awareness about their continuing education programs through a marketing campaign and within their own school board by school presentations during staff meetings.

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD AND ADULT EDUCATION CONTEXT

The CDSBEO currently operates 42 schools across 8 counties in Eastern Ontario. The Board's jurisdiction covers an area of 12,165 square kilometres. The Board offers quality Catholic educational programs to approximately 12,900 students, and it employs 890 teachers and 535 support staff. The CDSBEO offers a distinctive Catholic school environment which focuses on education excellence, a variety of programs for every learner, and developing the spiritual growth of our students.

The School of Alternative and Continuing Education (St. James Catholic Education Centre) is working to increase growth mindset in students through wellness programming, equity and inclusion, and credit accumulation through improved pathway planning in all schools that it oversees. The school currently

oversees an abundance of education options including: the Alternative Education Program (Turning Points/ABLE), eLearning, Continuing Education Adult Day School, Continuing Education Adult Night School, Summer School, Personal Support Worker Accredited Program, and PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition). The school also offers Dual-Credit learning opportunities, Cooperative Education programs, and OYAP apprenticeship career pathways. Drop-in services for students are available in Smiths Falls and Cornwall to help support eLearning.

RAISING PROGRAM AWARENESS

Community members and staff in many school boards are unaware of the adult and continuing education programs that are offered in their local school boards at little or no cost. Staff at The School of Alternative and Continuing Education (St. James Catholic Education Centre) took on the project of building awareness of their continuing education programs within their community and their own school board. To do this, they developed a marketing campaign and did school presentations in their board during staff meetings.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Staff at The School of Alternative and Continuing Education (St. James Catholic Education Centre) used the following research question to guide their project:

How does our marketing campaign and school presentations influence awareness of adult education in students and staff?

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Prior to launching a marketing campaign and doing school presentations, staff at St. James Catholic Education Centre (CEC) plotted all their student registrants (using Google MyMaps) from the past three years to gather baseline data and to examine whether there were areas of their board that were not being served. Areas of low registration were targeted as locations in which to focus their marketing campaign. The staff also had the opportunity to present about their continuing programs to Senior Administration and Trustees at one of the October Board Meetings.

In November 2018, St. James CEC staff initiated an extensive marketing campaign. The marketing campaign included radio ads, interior bus signs, magnetic road signs, Facebook ads, website and school newsletters. They tracked calls and emails with respect to the types of program inquiries made, where the person inquiring lived, and how the inquirer heard about the school. The question, "How did you hear about us?" was added to all school surveys and registrations. In the spring, a billboard in Cornwall went up and the school started using Google Ads.

St. James CEC staff began presenting to all schools in the board about their continuing education programs at the start of November 2018. Presentations were 15-20 minutes in length and a common PowerPoint was created to ensure the same message was delivered to all school communities. Baseline knowledge of CDSBEO staff about the board's continuing education programs was captured with a brief five question pre-survey prior to the presentation and then the same five questions were administered after the presentations, along with three open-ended questions. At the conclusion of each presentation, continuing education program flyers were left at the school for reference and for staff to give to parents.



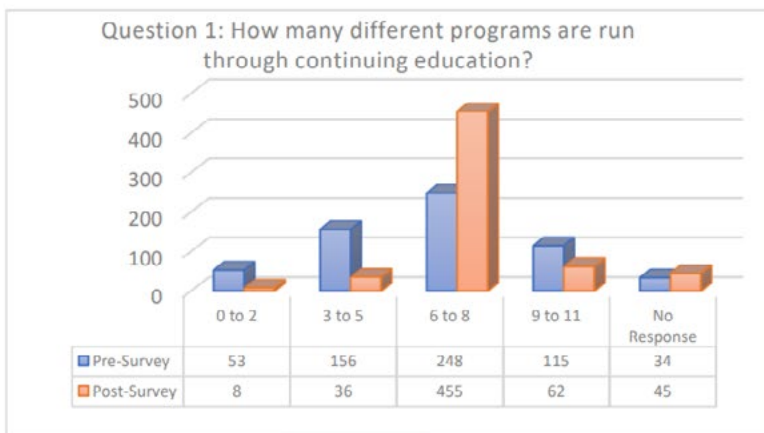
DATA COLLECTED

St. James CEC staff collected data about the number of school board staff they presented to, pre- and post-presentation survey results, and how adult learners heard about their programs. Approximately 606 people (in 32 of the board’s 42 schools) were presented to about the board’s adult education programs and completed a short pre- and post-presentation survey. According to the survey data, many staff within the CDSBEO were unaware of the number of continuing education programs offered or that there was even an adult education program (see Figure 1). With respect to responses to open-ended questions, 56% of respondents commented about their lack of awareness of the continuing education program and 20% of respondents commented about their lack of awareness about the variety of programs available. For example, one respondent wrote: “I am surprised by how many programs are offered through our school board. Ten years of working in our board and I had no idea.”

FIGURE 1. SURVEY QUESTION ABOUT THE NUMBER OF CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Question 1: How many different programs are run through continuing education?

We have 8 schools that operate out of St. James CEC, making it the largest school in our board. Schools are:

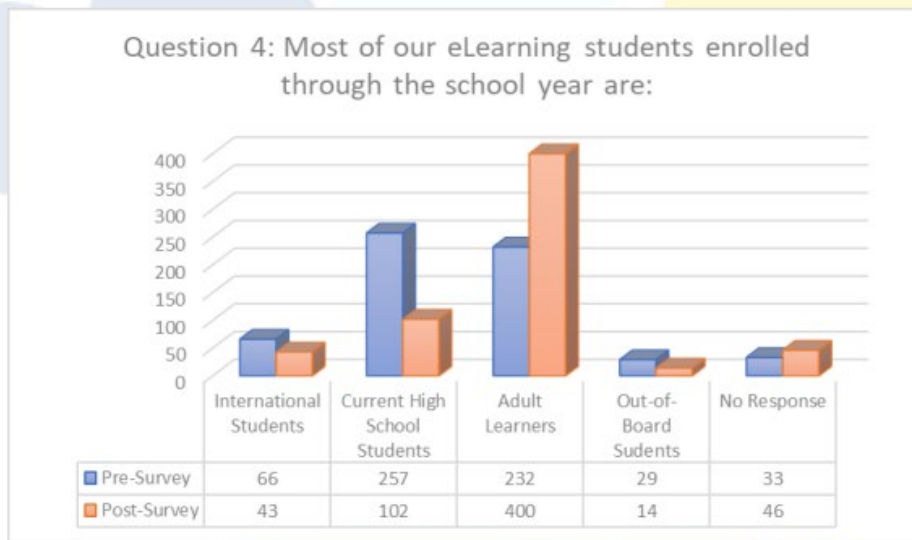


- Turning Points/ABLE (Elementary and Secondary)
- Adult Day School- PSW program
- Continuing Education Night School
- Literacy/Numeracy School
- eLearning
- Summer School
- International Education

In addition, many CDSBEO staff were unaware that most students who take part in eLearning are adults (see Figure 2). There was a recent shift in the board to make eLearning available for adult learners.

FIGURE 2. SURVEY QUESTION ABOUT THE NUMBER OF ELEARNING STUDENTS

Question 4: Most of our eLearning students enrolled through the school year are:

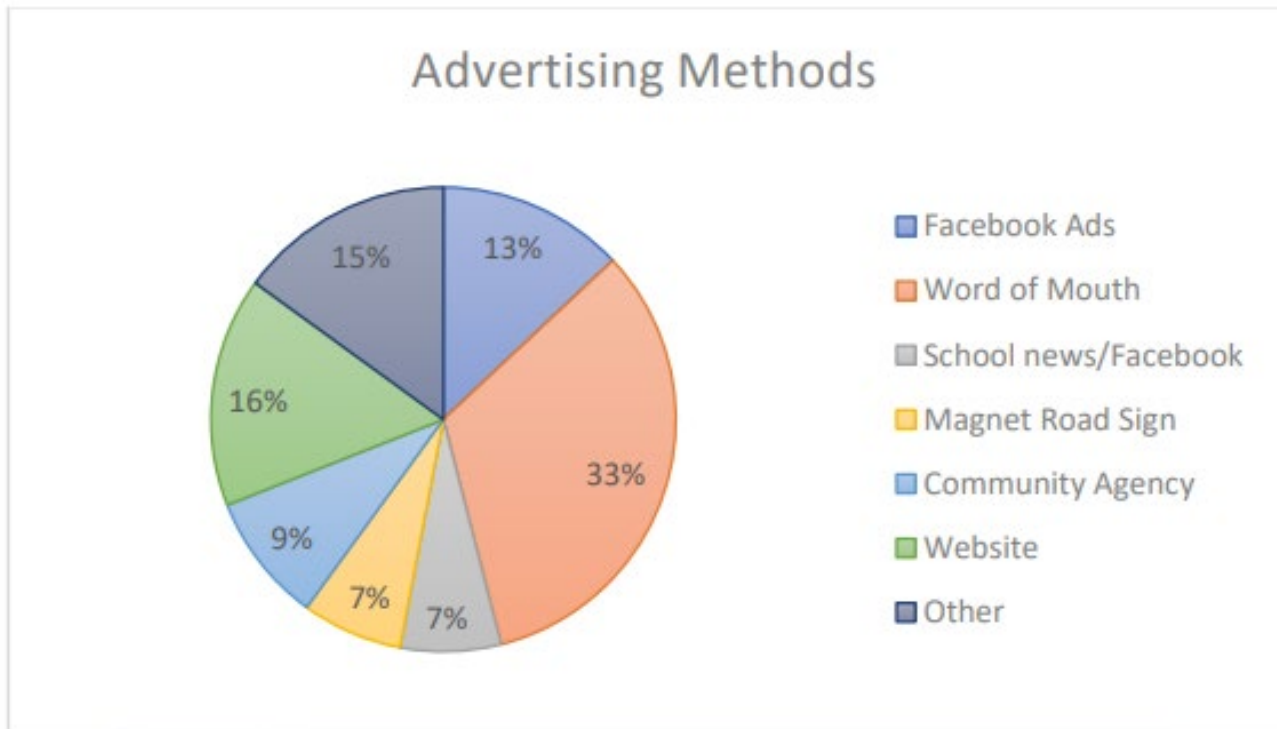


When we considered eLearning, we felt highlighting eLearning courses through the school year were mainly for adults as we are really trying to change the view of online learning with our day school teachers and students. We wanted to emphasize the fact that most of our online learners through the school year are adult learners, and not high school learners as it had been in the past.



With respect to how students heard about CDSBEO continuing education programs, the four most popular forms of advertising were: word of mouth (33%), website (16%), and Facebook (15%), and school newsletters (13%; see Figure 3). Given that magnet signs were used in remote areas, it was positive to see that 7% of students registering heard about the program with this method. No students identified radio ads as a form of advertising that directed them to CDSBEO continuing education programs.

FIGURE 3. HOW STUDENTS HEARD ABOUT CDSBEO CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS



RAISING PROGRAM AWARENESS PROJECT RESULTS

As a result of this project, many CDSBEO staff are now aware of the program offerings that St. James (CEC) has for adult learners. Moreover, CDSBEO staff expressed interest in helping make this information available to the parents of students who attend their schools, which is very promising. In addition, St. James CEC staff have a greater understanding of the types of advertising that help promote their programs and in which locations different types of advertising are effective. The most effective forms of advertising were word of mouth, Facebook ads, website information, and school newsletters. In remote areas, magnet road signs were helping raise awareness about the programs available through St. James CEC.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

St. James CEC staff learned a number of valuable lessons from this project. These key lessons were:

- It was worth it to go to all the schools in the board to promote program awareness and the positive things happening in continuing education; it allowed the team to develop a point of contact with the schools
- School board staff appreciated the brief introduction to the continuing education program because the world of adult education is so different from the world of kindergarten to grade 12
- The project was a beneficial team building exercise as members learned themselves about the other programs offered through continuing education (e.g., OYAP red seal trades, eLearning, PSW)
- Word of mouth, Facebook ads, website information, and school newsletters were the most successful methods of advertising in terms of encouraging enrollment.
- Elementary schools were less aware and informed of adult education programs than secondary schools

SUSTAINABILITY OF RAISING PROGRAM AWARENESS PROJECT

St. James CEC staff will continue to raise awareness about their continuing education programs within the CDSBEO community through various board events. Now that CDSBEO school board staff been introduced to the various programs offered, St. James CEC staff are looking forward to working on next steps for developing partnerships with schools, particularly with high schools to eliminate the stigma of continuing education and make students aware of options available to them. St. James CEC staff's greater understanding of effective advertising methods will ensure they are allocating financial resources in the best places possible. On a positive note, most methods of effective advertising were all no or low-cost methods (e.g., word of mouth, placing consistent messages in our school newsletters about the programming that is available to adults, Facebook ads). In addition, as St. James CEC staff continues to raise awareness of their programs, their enrollment should increase, which means they will receive more funding for their programs.

RAISING PROGRAM AWARENESS ADVICE FOR OTHER BOARDS

The advice St. James CEC staff would give to other boards interested in raising awareness about their adult and continuing education programs is to start local and small scale within your board. For the most part, it does not cost anything to increase awareness within your school communities. To ensure success, develop a strategic plan and take a team approach to how you will make school board staff aware of the programs available for adult learners. It is important to remember that school board employees can become great ambassadors and advocates for adult and continuing education. In addition, tracking which advertising methods are the most effective for promoting student enrolment in adult and continuing education programs can help ensure that funds are invested in advertising intelligently.



CASE STUDY THREE: HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



INTRODUCTION

The following case study details the mandate selected by the Hastings and Prince Edward County District School Board and describes the results of the implementation of their mandate to pilot a new online process for intake, assessment, and referral of adult learners.

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD AND ADULT EDUCATION CONTEXT

HPEDSB serves approximately 15,000 students each day at 40 schools (33 elementary, one K-12; two 7-12 and four secondary). Supporting student achievement is the goal of approximately 1,800 teaching and support staff who, in addition to the contributions of caring volunteers and community partners, share their passion for teaching and learning. The district covers a wide geographic area of 7,221 square kilometres bordered by Maynooth to the north, Deseronto to the east, Prince Edward County to the south and Quinte West to the west. HPEDSB is a rural board that is experiencing declining enrolment of students.

Quinte Adult Education (QAE) is part of HPEDSB and located in Belleville Ontario, with additional branch offices in Madoc and Trenton. QAE programs are available to adults who are 18+ years and not enrolled in any other full-time program. QAE offer several ways to obtain high school credits and upgrade skills including, adult e-learning, correspondence courses with free tutoring available twice a week, and other credit opportunities including Learn While you Earn, Equivalency, Apprenticeships, and Prior Learning and Assessment Recognition.

INTAKE, ASSESSMENT, AND REFERRAL

Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB) self-selected the development and implementation of a pilot project that focussed on an online process for coordinated information, intake, assessment and referral to ensure learners were/are directed to the program or service that best meet their needs.

QAE PILOT PROJECT BACKGROUND

The QAE team undertook a project to implement an online registration process for students. The intended outcome was to facilitate a registration process that would retain and increase student registrations. In addition, QAE hoped to increase their level of engagement with and support for students as a result of the new streamlined process. QAE has a small office staff and one coordinator to support over 1200 students. Currently, students over the age of 18 wishing to register for programming must telephone in to QAE, and an office administrator takes their information and enters it into the Maplewood database used by HPEDSB. The existing registration process consisted of the following multiple stages:

- (1) Students make a telephone call to register or physically attend a site to register,
- (2) Out of district students are asked to email QAE to obtain registration forms,
- (3) Office staff email students their registration forms with instructions,
- (4) Students must mail registration forms with transcript,
- (5) Students must then be registered manually into Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)/D2L,
- (6) Data is entered into Student Information System,
- (7) Data is entered into spreadsheet for tracking purposes, and
- (8) Students may also come into the office to register face-to-face.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does an online registration process influence intake/assessment and referral in an adult education program?

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The QAE team undertook a series of consultations with all staff, stakeholders, and adult learners prior to commencing the innovative intake, assessment, and referral project. Following these consultations, the QAE team also undertook a series of consultations with Information Technology Services. From this point, the QAE team completed the following project implantation phases:

- reviewed privacy policy procedures with HPEDSB,
- contacted 3rd party service providers to develop online program,
- reviewed integration option with current Student Information System (SIS),
- tested Google Form Registration Option,
- consulted with QAE staff and stakeholders during project,
- consulted with QAE students during project, and
- undertook data entry to ensure registration data matched SIS data.



DATA COLLECTED

The QAE team administered a survey to their adult learners asking them to rate using the paper registration process. Results of this survey can be found in Table 1.

TABLE 1. ADULT LEARNER RATING OF USING PAPER-BASED REGISTRATION PROCESS

	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
Efficiency							All students gave the paper registration process a 4 or 5 in the linear scale
Convenient							Majority of students scored a 5 with one scoring a 3 and one scoring a 4
Easy to Understand							Majority of students scored a 5 with one scoring 4 and one scoring 2
Ability to Ask Questions							Majority of students scored a 5 with one scoring 3
How quick of a response from staff							Majority of students scored a 5 with one scoring a 3

QAE PILOT PROJECT RESULTS

The results of the adult learner survey showed that in some cases, students preferred the paper registration process when coming into the office, but the majority also appreciated the ability to complete some of the registration online. For example, some students want to express an interest in the program and investigate what they might be required to do in order to graduate with their high school diploma, but would just like the option of making a quick phone call to obtain answers to a few of their questions.

In order to roll out the project and not compromise the registration process for adult learners, the QAE team duplicated processes by undertaking the new pilot online process and the existing paper-based registrations simultaneously. This strategy helped to ensure that adult learners were not compromised in the registration process. As the QAE team completed the pilot implementation and testing of the online version of intake, assessment, and referral, they wanted confidence in their ability to record and have continual access to the relevant data. The QAE team also ensured that adult learner needs and circumstances were fully recorded, with the existing paper-based system serving as a potential back-up should the pilot online system fail in some unexpected manner.

By offering an enhanced online registration process, adult learners quickly began to anticipate a more streamlined feedback and connection with their teacher. As part of the project, the QAE team implemented an online lesson submission form for students using e-learning. When the adult learner submitted their lesson, the new system prompted the teacher immediately once the lesson arrived in the office. Teachers appreciated the efficiency of these instant updates and the ability to enter marks and feedback quickly.

However, it is important to remember that a significant number of adult learners deeply value the face-to-face meeting or a personal phone call with a member of adult education staff who scaffolds and supports their entry back into an educational environment. Returning to an adult school can be traumatic for some adult learners who may have had negative past experiences of school, as school may have been a context of adversity. In all cases, the personalized and welcoming impact of a caring adult was a difference maker in this pilot project. The technology was an efficiency measure to complement the existing highly personalised and caring service provided by HPEDSB.

Consequently, all of the QAE staff were supportive of changing to an online process to support efficiency and allow for a modern medium of communication with the adult learners. However, the QAE team stressed that student needs must remain the priority and come before the speed of registration. In particular, the QAE team recognize that moving adult learners through the intake, assessment, and referral process is not an assembly line, but a relationship that if formed, supported, and nurtured throughout the period of the adult's learning with QAE.



LESSONS LEARNED

A number of key lessons were learned by QAE through their participation in this pilot initiative, including:

- The scope and size of this project was a much bigger undertaking than first envisioned.
- The registration process needed to be a two-stage process. For example, a student completed a biographic online registration in which QAE followed up with a phone call or face-to-face meeting for the Guidance piece.
- An additional layer of registration needs to be completed to confirm course codes etc. This second round of registration has been done on paper to track this information for student file. Currently QAE do not have the capacity to open up an existing online registration to complete the second component. The initial registration supports the transfer of data to SIS.
- The challenge lies in ensuring all components of program can be covered in online registration, for example, Co-op, PLAR, Correspondence, and Online Courses.
- Implementation during the busiest registration time of year was a significant strain on QAE staff.
- Students valued the face-to-face conversations and gained momentum from staff encouragement and support during these moments.
- Regular check-in opportunities or registering for a second course has improved processing time, but majority of students preferred to come into the office.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE QAE PILOT PROJECT

The project was felt to be sustainable under the following circumstances:

- If adequate and appropriate succession planning and training are provided for ITS, QAE staff.
- There exists a knowledge base of ITS support staff to maintain these networks and integrations.
- If the current SIS and Connect Ed infrastructure are maintained.
- If 3rd party vendor continues to include service with current agreement.
- Not sustainable with “Easy Register” upfront costs and yearly maintenance cost.
- Normal cost of maintenance of electronic devices should be easily supported by existing program.
- Google Apps for Education was a component with limited cost but was helpful for data collection and analysis.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS CONSIDERING SIMILAR PILOT PROJECTS

The QAE team made a number of recommendations for other district school boards who may be considering similar online registration processes for their intake, assessment, and referral processes with their adult learners including:

TABLE 2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARDS

Technological Needs	Staff Preparation	Meeting Adult Learner Needs
Ensuring you can convert all students into the registration data base at the same time	Targeting (and perhaps limiting) the implementation process to the start of a school year	Ensuring the adult learner voice and personal contact is maintained and remains at the heart of practice and service for adult learners
Ensuring you have the capacity to invest in significant IT support for setup and integration with existing systems	Ensuring that all staff see the value of the changes and potential improvement for students, and are subsequently engaged in and committed to the new online process	Reflect on current student documentation and current paper trail for all adult learners, and utilize what already works
Factoring in sufficient time to permit the various technological pieces to be completed to allow for compliance with various board procedures	Developing a program to release staff in order for them to have time to develop and implement the project	
Acquire or apportion sufficient funding for devices in kiosk mode at office locations		



THE QAE TEAM LEARNINGS FROM PROJECT PARTICIPATION

The QAE team appreciated the opportunity to come together as a district team to reflect on their current practice and have a structured and supported opportunity to pilot an alternative way to undertake the intake, assessment, and referral process with their adult learners. The QAE team were excited to implement an innovative project, that all involved agreed would lead to improved service for the adult education students, and ultimately facilitate more adult learners to move smoothly through the adult learning system and achieve their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

The QAE team entered this pilot project wanting to honour their students' voices, and worked to ensure that adult learner feedback informed the project at each stage. By adopting a purposeful lens towards removing barriers for students in accessing adult education, the QAE team ensured that adult learners remained at the heart of this pilot initiative. Subsequently, their pilot online intake, assessment, and referral process was constructed with learner needs very much in mind. The QAE team are excited about the sustainability of the pilot and the improvements to the process they have already completed, but they acknowledge their work on further refining the process is not done. The QAE team intend on continuing to focus on a service excellence model, further refining and adding efficiency to their system and processes whilst keeping the adult learner experience at the heart of their work. As the QAE team undertake continuous improvement at Quinte Adult Education, this mission aligns with their identified district priorities of Achieving Excellence and Equity and Public Confidence.

CASE STUDY FOUR: LIMESTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



INTRODUCTION

The following case study details the mandate selected by the Limestone District School Board (LDSB) and describes the results of the implementation of their mandate to look at alternative ways of providing appropriate alternative and continuing education programming to adult learners.

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD AND ADULT EDUCATION CONTEXT

The LDSB offers elementary and secondary students an education that is enriched with diverse and unique programming opportunities and activities to complement the Ontario curriculum while supporting the achievement and well-being of every student. LDSB serves more than 19,000 students in 57 schools and 8 education centres covering a geographic area of 7,719 square kilometres across the City of Kingston, the Townships of Central Frontenac, North Frontenac, South Frontenac, Addington Highlands, Loyalist, Stone Mills, the Frontenac Islands and the Town of Greater Napanee. The LDSB aims to provide all learners with life-long opportunities for success by offering alternative education experiences in a variety of community settings. These programs provide students with opportunities to earn credits towards the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) and to develop the skills and confidence they need to re-enter the regular school system. LDSB offers adult

education and alternative programming to support high-school-aged and adult learners toward earning an OSSD, or who need a few courses to graduate, want to upgrade existing credits, earn credits while they work, or transition to college (students under age 21). Sites may offer a mix of independent and group learning and hands-on community connected opportunities. Most alternative programming sites are connected to one of our secondary schools.

FLEXIBLE DELIVERY

Limestone District School Board (LDSB) self-selected the development and implementation of regionally coordinated access to flexible delivery of EDU Adult and Continuing Education programs and/or services that best meet adult learner needs mandate with the overarching goal of providing appropriate alternative and continuing education programming to adult learners, with the hope that adult learner participants would be able to work towards gaining their secondary school diploma requirements.

PILOT PROJECT BACKGROUND

Through the flexible delivery pilot project, the LDSB team sought to extend the math learning of primary students at Prince Charles Public School (PCPS), and engage parents in the same mathematics learning (using the Literacy and Numeracy Register for Parents/Guardians). Through this work, the LDSB team hoped that parent engagement would improve,



and the result in improved student engagement in mathematics. Through this work, the LDSB team connected interested parents with the appropriate alternative and continuing education programming, with the hope that they would be able to work towards gaining their OSSD requirements.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does caregiver engagement in the primary math program promote personal growth and lifelong learning for participants and their students?

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The LDSB team undertook a series of team meetings prior to commencing the flexible delivery pilot project. Following these meetings, the LDSB team completed the following project implementation phases:

- At the project commencement, the LDSB team connected with the Queen's University research group that was already established at Prince Charles Public School and established a partnership for the purposes of the pilot project,
- The LDSB team met with the Principal of the target school and developed a plan for the roll out throughout the school year,
- The Principal, in agreement with the LDSB team brought in a parent who worked in the school and trained them as a math tutor to provide the sessions to parents,
- The planned sessions for parents were based on the math curriculum,
- The school's parent council and wider school community were engaged through social media, local church, and businesses,
- Information sessions held with parents to explain the program and gain participation,

- A series of math sessions held with parents/ caregivers/grandparents who were interested in participating. These were based on primary curriculum that the students were already learning about, but the sessions were specifically aimed for caregivers and grandparents,
- During the sessions, the caregivers were asked to self-identify whether they were interested in gaining their secondary school diploma, and if yes, the LDSB team built pathway plans for each caregiver, and
- The LDSB team made each adult learner aware of the flexible delivery approach and possibilities including PLAR, flexible delivery to bring programming to their community, co-operative education etc.

DATA COLLECTED

Although this pilot project had originally intended to collect data related to the research question, time constraints and cancelled sessions due to inclement weather thwarted efforts to collect pertinent data.

PILOT PROJECT RESULTS

The LDSB team reported a number of key outcomes from the flexible delivery pilot project including:

- 41 parent/caregivers took part,
- The first session generated an average daily enrolment (ADE) of 0.064 equating to approximately \$470 in grant revenue from the Ontario Ministry of Education Literacy and Numeracy register.
- There were 3 additional sessions planned for the spring of 2019,
- Both adult learners and their children (Prince Charles Public School students) reported that they enjoyed the sessions and were excited to repeat the activities at home,

- Further sessions are scheduled the evening prior to the PA day so that adult learners and students can reinforce the learning,
- 4 of the caregivers self- identified as interested in obtaining further information regarding achieving an OSSD, and
- There was an agreement that will grow with multiple sessions.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PILOT PROJECT

The LDSB team believe that other district school boards could take the framework and principles of their flexible delivery pilot project and adapt it for their own system/purposes. However, the following features should be considered:

- All School Boards have access to the Literacy and Numeracy Register for Parents and or Guardians of pupils enrolled in grades JK/ SK to 12 in a day school program for whom Literacy and Numeracy has been recommended by the principal of the pupil's day school,
- Funding is generated via parent attendance to support the hiring of a tutor to engage parents in Math,
- Parents who self- identify as requiring their OSSD, can access a variety of continuing education programming including Mature PLAR pathway planning, Cooperative Education, and day /night school credit programming, and
- Adult Learners (parents and caregivers) will then generate funding via PLAR, the Literacy Numeracy register, day school and or continuing education register, and
- There is scope to to extend this opportunity to all elementary schools in the Limestone board.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS CONSIDERING SIMILAR PILOT PROJECTS

The LDSB team made some recommendations for other district school boards who may be considering similar guidance and pathway planning processes with their adult learners including:

- Where possible attend Parent Council meetings to get potential adult learners interested,
- Advertise via social media and information nights held at elementary and possibly secondary schools within the DSB,
- Provide adult learners (parents) sessions the evening prior to PA days so that caregivers can use activities the next day when the learning is still fresh, and
- Understand the various funding registers and how they are used.



THE LDSB TEAM LEARNINGS FROM PROJECT PARTICIPATION

The LDSB team appreciated the opportunity to come together as a team to reflect on their current practice and have a structured and supported opportunity to pilot an innovative way to offer flexible delivery of programs within adult and continuing education to their adult learners. Of particular value to the LDSB team was the opportunity to learn that:

- Parents in the PCPS community prefer an informal approach to math,
- Programming should be provided in the evening to include their students, and
- There is a need to advertise early to capture October 31 and, or March 31 to provide sufficient time for interested caregivers to register in an adult credit or non-credit program.

CASE STUDY FIVE: OTTAWA CARLETON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Continuing Education

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board / Continuing Education



INTRODUCTION

This case study describes the work the Adult High School and Continuing Education team in the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) undertook to develop a resource for its community partners to help them understand the nature and scope of adult and continuing education programs in the Ottawa region for referral purposes. This project also helped OCDSB staff develop deeper knowledge of their credit and non-credit adult education programs.

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD AND ADULT EDUCATION CONTEXT

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) is the largest school board in Eastern Ontario, serving students within the City of Ottawa, covering an area of 3,760 square kilometres. The OCDSB has 147 school sites (117 elementary and 25 secondary – including the Adult High School – and five secondary alternate sites).

The Adult High School (AHS) in the OCDSB is a full-time regular high school that specializes in working with adults (18+) from a wide variety of backgrounds. At the school, classes run from Monday to Friday, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm. There are approximately 1300 students enrolled in the AHS. The school has 75 knowledgeable staff, a Student Services Department to support student success, a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process that

grants Ontario credit equivalencies for appropriate work and life experiences, Cooperative Education to gain workplace experience and earn high school credits at the same time, and English as a Second Language (ESL) support. Adult learners at the school can work towards earning their high school diploma or upgrading their skills and knowledge to prepare for work, apprenticeship, college, or university.

DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY PARTNER REFERRAL RESOURCE PROJECT

Many adult and continuing education clients in the Ottawa region originate from community partners (e.g., social service agencies, settlement agencies). However, community partners are often unaware of the multitude of adult learning opportunities available for their clients. The OCDSB team reached out to community service agencies and developed a resource about adult learning opportunities available in Ottawa to assist with appropriate referrals. During this project, OCDSB staff also acquired more knowledge of credit and non-credit adult education programs in the city to support formal and informal pathway planning opportunities with students.



RESEARCH QUESTION

The OCDSB team used the following research questions to guide their project:

How might a referral tool for adult learners assist community service providers in addressing pathway questions from clients?

What co-learning opportunities can be created/offered between adult credit and non-credit classrooms to foster a better understanding of our shared work to assist with future student direction?

Continuing Education at OCDSB offers a variety of programs throughout the year to support lifelong learning. Programs include: International and Indigenous Languages (offered at both the Elementary and Secondary levels), English as a Second Language(ESL)/Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) and Academic Upgrading & Employment Preparation Literacy and Basic Skills(LBS), Night and Summer School Secondary Credit Programs, Adult pathway planning toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), Literacy and Numeracy Support programs as well as the MacSkimming Outdoor Education and Bill Mason Outdoor Centres and Adult Cooperative Education.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

To engage community service partners and assist with their understanding of Ottawa-based adult learning programs, the OCDSB team hosted an inaugural, facilitator led, Partnership Building Event in May of 2018. Representatives from 44 community service organizations/agencies attended. The event included a series of short informational presentations by principals/staff from the Adult High School (OCDSB), Ottawa Carleton District School Board Continuing Education, Ottawa Catholic School Board Adult & Continuing Education, Ottawa Carleton District School Board Alternate Sites, Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM)/Ontario Youth Apprenticeship

Program (OYAP), and Cooperative Education for Adults. To solicit feedback regarding the needs of community partners, participants engaged in guided discussions and recorded their responses for the OCDSB team to review. Discussion questions included:

- What prevents your clients without a HS diploma from going back to school?
- What might a successful partnership between your organization and the school boards look like?
- What do you need from the panel to support your clients to get back to school?

The venture was so successful that the OCDSB team hosted a second Partnership Building Event in November 2018 that expanded to include post-secondary institutions (e.g., Algonquin College). In response to this newly developed partnership, community service agencies invited Adult and Continuing Education staff to their quarterly meetings. Based upon feedback from these partnership meetings, it became evident that community partners needed reader-friendly information about the adult education programs in Ottawa so that they could refer their clients to suitable programs. In turn, the OCDSB team decided to develop a community partner referral resource with easy to access information about the different adult education programs in the city.

To facilitate OCDSB staff knowledge of credit and non-credit adult education programs, the team facilitated a day of partnership building activities for teachers/instructors/leaders in December of 2018. The day included presentations about all programs to equip staff with information about different learning pathways available for adults. In addition, reciprocal classroom visits between credit and non-credit program staff were conducted. Partnered staff presented their experiences and observations to the larger group during a shared learning opportunity. Once OCDSB staff had a better understanding of both credit and non-credit adult education programs

available to students, they contributed to the development of the community partner referral resource. In addition, the OCDSB team worked with the Ottawa Catholic School Board to feature their adult and continuing education programs in the community partner referral resource.

DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY PARTNER REFERRAL RESOURCE PROJECT RESULTS

As a result of repeated consultation with community partners about their needs, the OCDSB team developed a comprehensive community partner referral resource about adult education programs in Ottawa. The resource highlighted information about ESL and LINC, Literacy Basic Skills, and High School credit opportunities. Each program was outlined using the following information: description, mode of delivery, time and duration, eligibility and suitability of learners, location, registration information, childcare availability, transportation requirements, and website and contact information.

The OCDSB staff partnership building day and reciprocal classroom visits have provided staff with more fulsome information and firsthand experience about the variety of adult education programs offered by the board. Staff are now more aware and equipped to share about the variety of credit and non-credit learning opportunities available to their students. Although this pilot project had originally intended to collect data related to the research question, time constraints and cancelled sessions due to inclement weather thwarted efforts to collect pertinent data.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

The key lessons learned by the OCDSB team in the development of a community partner referral resource were:

- An understanding of the variety of adult education programs offered in Ottawa allowed the team to compare the programs and look for overlap of services, as well as gaps
- It is important to work in harmony with co-terminus partners to align our programs and services to minimize overlap, while providing different learning platforms for students
- The team developed a better understanding of the relationship between Canadian Language Benchmarks and High School credit
- Credit teachers gained a greater appreciation for the work done in the non-credit classrooms and the value of a longer teaching block (3 hours vs 75 minutes).
- Absenteeism and attrition are issues in both credit and non-credit programs
- Irrespective of program, Adult Education teachers are passionate about their craft and success for students
- The critical importance of establishing relationships with key contacts in community organizations to better serve adult learners

SUSTAINABILITY OF A COMMUNITY PARTNER REFERRAL RESOURCE

The OCDSB staff will continue to deepen their partnerships with community agencies to support the needs of adult learners. In addition, they intend to collect data about the use and effectiveness of their community partner referral resource so they can improve it accordingly. The OCDSB would like to continue to have staff participate in reciprocal classroom visits across credit and non-credit adult education programs, but this will not be possible without monetary support for teacher release time.



COMMUNITY PARTNER REFERRAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT ADVICE FOR OTHER BOARDS

Developing community partnerships is essential for making clients aware of the adult education opportunities that are available to them. District school boards must reach out to community service agencies and act with patience and persistence to make those connections. When considering the development of a community partner referral resource, it is important to ask for input from community partners and include the programs of co-terminus boards. It is equally vital to make adult education staff aware of the variety of programs offered in the region so that they can provide students with all viable options. The words of one advocate of adult education ring true: “You cannot afford not to do outreach in support of students.”

CASE STUDY SIX: OTTAWA CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD



INTRODUCTION

This case study describes the work that staff at St. Nicholas Adult High School in the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB) undertook to improve their PLAR process.

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD AND ADULT EDUCATION CONTEXT

The OCSB is a publicly funded separate school board in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Its headquarters are in the Nepean area of Ottawa. It employs approximately 4000 people and operates 84 schools in the greater Ottawa area, with a total student population of approximately 38,800.

St. Nicholas Adult High School (SNAHS) is part of the OCSB and has two locations in Ottawa (Central and West). At SNAHS, adults (18+) can earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma, earn pre-requisites for post-secondary education, or upgrade their current marks. St. Nicholas Adult High School offers flexible and supported e-learning, where students can work at home or at school with the assistance of a teacher. SNAHS also provides PLAR or Mature Student Evaluations (for eligible adults), Credits@Work for employed students, guidance counselling, and a caring and dedicated staff.

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION (PLAR) PROJECT

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a process that allows adult learners to obtain academic credit for skills and knowledge acquired through life and work experiences. It is a powerful tool for recognizing equivalent learning adults have obtained outside of the school system. To consider how best to improve their PLAR process, staff at St. Nicholas Adult High School engaged in an intensive and internal review of their PLAR practices and examined practices at other school boards. In doing so, they identified numerous areas that would benefit from modernization in their PLAR delivery model (i.e., Promotion, Intake, Registration, Learning Environment, Assessment, Post-PLAR relationship, etc.) Their objective was to transform the PLAR process to make it more personalized, student-friendly, effective, efficient and supportive of deep learning. By doing so, it was believed that there would be an increase in PLAR participation, credit accumulation, and greater PLAR understanding among learners and community partners.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The staff at St. Nicholas Adult High School used the following research question to guide their project:

- How should we modify current PLAR practices to better serve the needs of 21st century mature learners at St. Nicholas Adult High School, OCSB?

Two follow-up research questions were used to document the effectiveness of the modernized PLAR process:

- How has the updated PLAR process influenced participation rates?
- How has the student experience of the PLAR process changed?

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

In the first phase of project implementation, an OCSB PLAR project team was established to analyze and review *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*, Policy/Program Memorandum No. 132 related to PLAR, and the Board's current PLAR processes within their adult education programs. This included reviewing current practices from beginning to end, examining current assessment tools and resources, as well as liaising with other school boards to learn about different models of PLAR services.

Using the information gathered in the first phase, the OCSB team conducted a needs assessment to identify areas of need and related best practices to support the implementation of a revised, innovative PLAR delivery model. This phase included consultation with adult learners, Community and Continuing Education staff, and community partners to determine the degree of PLAR understanding and student engagement.

Based on these two initial phases of implementation, a team decision was made to pilot an innovative PLAR model that incorporates professional learning for staff, modernized intake services, a new student tracking process, a more personalized student-friendly approach, improved methods of feedback, and new methods of defining equivalencies and recognition of prior learning. Upon implementation of the new PLAR model, the impact on learners was assessed by reviewing staff feedback, learner feedback, enrollment changes, credit accumulation, and graduation rates. In addition, the impact on teachers, Student Services staff, and support staff was assessed to inform decisions with respect to staff and the sustainability of this new PLAR delivery model.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PLAR PROCESS AT ST. NICHOLAS ADULT HIGH SCHOOL

Using the CESBA document titled, *Qualities of High Functioning PLAR for Mature Students Program* - September 2017, as a guide, the OCSB team initiated a number of updates and major upgrades to the PLAR process. The improvements were as follows:

- PLAR assessments for English and History/ Geography/Civics & Careers were updated.
- Three of the four PLAR assessments are now available via an online format
- As part of general registration, students are identified as PLAR-eligible and given a full explanation of the process (with a student-friendly handout) by Guidance staff, including the benefits and the steps needed to access PLAR; in the past adult learners met with the PLAR assessor, who was only at the school two half mornings a week, to hear about the process

- In the past, Senior PLAR was limited to three credits (GLN4O, HIP4O, HPC3O), but now a Senior PLAR Questionnaire is used to identify and recognize the life experiences of adult learners that match Ontario Curriculum expectations
- PLAR eligible students are tracked with a hard copy document, and there is a PLAR tracking sheet (Google document) for each PLAR eligible student that is shared between Guidance staff and the PLAR assessor
- The OCSB team developed and implemented a PLAR promotional strategy which included: newly created PLAR posters placed in the schools and throughout the city, an updated PLAR brochure that is shared with learning and community partners, PLAR promotional materials via the school's website and social media, and members of the PLAR team have visited their affiliated Adult Education credit and non-credit programs to make staff and learners aware of PLAR

In summary, St. Nicholas Adult High School has made improvements to their PLAR process by ensuring that all adult learners understand the PLAR process upon registration, raising awareness about PLAR and its benefits of PLAR to staff and learners, making PLAR more accessible for learners, and tracking the progress of PLAR eligible students.

DATA COLLECTED

To determine the effectiveness of the changes made to PLAR, the OCSB team distributed an online survey to their students and reviewed their data on PLAR participation rates. For the online survey, students in two different cohorts were sampled: a cohort from 2017-2018 before changes to PLAR had been made and a cohort from 2018-2019 after PLAR changes had been made. In the two cohorts, both students who had completed PLAR and students who had not completed PLAR were surveyed. To encourage survey participation, respondents were entered in a draw for ten \$25 Tim Horton's gift cards was used. In the

2017-2018 cohort, 24 students (14% response rate) who were PLAR eligible and completed PLAR and 18 students (4% response rate) who were PLAR eligible but did not take part in PLAR completed the survey. In the 2018-2019 cohort, 26 students (25% response rate) who were PLAR eligible and completed PLAR and 39 students (8% response rate) who were PLAR eligible but did not take part in PLAR completed the survey.

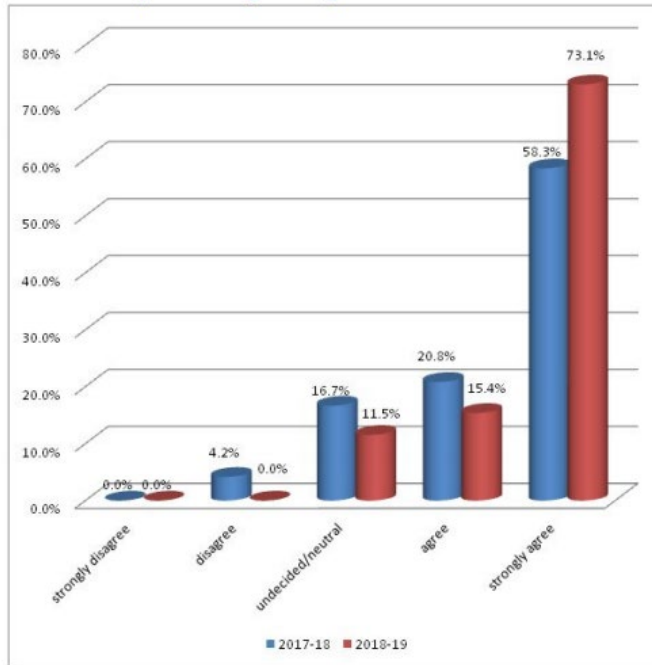
Out of the nine survey questions asked to students who had completed the PLAR process, results from two questions showed promising results. For Question 3, students were asked to rate their agreement with the statement, "The work I was required to complete through PLAR made sense based on the credits I had earned prior to registering at St. Nicholas." In the 2017-2018 cohort, 79.1% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. In the 2018-2019 cohort, 88.5% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, an increase of 9.4% from the prior year (see Figure 1).



FIGURE 1. STUDENT SURVEY RESPONSES ABOUT REQUIRED PLAR WORK

Question 3:

The work I was required to complete through PLAR made sense based on the credits I had earned prior to registering at St. Nicholas

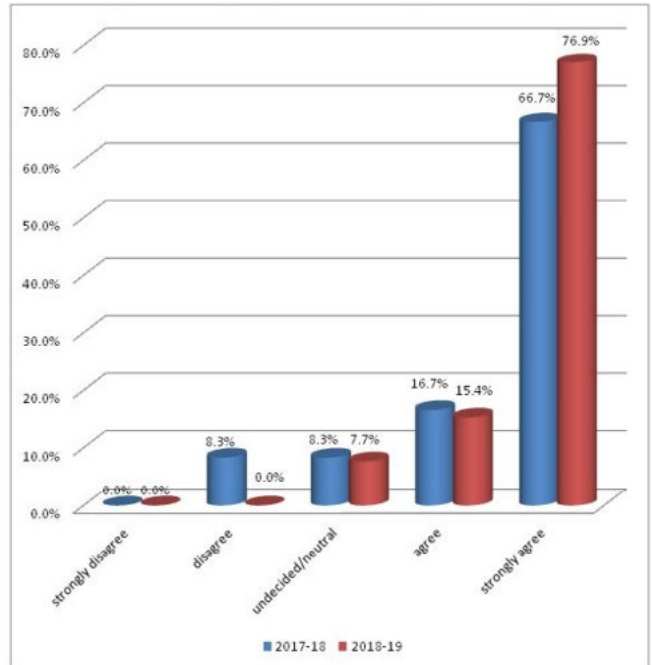


Last school year: 79.1% of our students Agree or Strongly Agree.
Current school year: 88.5% of our students Agree or Strongly Agree.

FIGURE 2. STUDENT SURVEY RESPONSES ABOUT SATISFACTION WITH THE PLAR PROCESS

Question 8:

I was satisfied with my experience through the PLAR process.



Last school year: 83.4% of our students Agree or Strongly Agree.
Current school year: 92.3% of our students Agree or Strongly Agree.

For Question 8, students were asked to rate their agreement with the statement, "I was satisfied with my experience through the PLAR process." In the 2017-2018 cohort, 83.4% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. In the 2018-2019 cohort, 92.3% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, an increase of 8.9% from the prior year (see Figure 2).

When students who had not completed PLAR were asked why they did not participate, 23.5% of students in the 2017-2018 cohort and 25.6% of students in the 2018-2019 cohort indicated that they were not made aware of the process. This response prompted St. Nicholas Adult High School to take a more systematic approach to having students told about PLAR upon registration.

FIGURE 3. OCSB PLAR PARTICIPATION RATES FROM 2016 TO 2019

March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019
104	109	114	161

Upon reviewing the OCSB’s PLAR participation rates from 2016 to 2019 (see Figure 3), it appears that participation rates have been steady at slightly above 100 from 2016 to 2018. On a positive note, the OCSB PLAR participation rate had an increase of 41% from March 2018 to March 2019. This is encouraging because it suggests that the OCSB’s PLAR changes have resulted in a higher PLAR participation rate.

The OCSB team developed an online student survey and reviewed PLAR participation rates to investigate the impact of the changes they made to PLAR. Online survey responses suggest that after PLAR improvements were made, there was a greater percentage of students who believed their required PLAR work makes sense and were satisfied with the PLAR process. Moreover, there was a 41% increase in PLAR participation rates from 2018 to 2019. This is very encouraging given that higher PLAR participation rates facilitate high school graduation.

PLAR PROJECT RESULTS

The new PLAR process at St. Nicholas Adult High School has resulted in a procedure that is streamlined and student-centred. All students are assessed for eligibility and suitability for PLAR at intake and advised accordingly. The majority of PLAR work can be done online to meet the needs of adult learners who have complex lives. In addition, there is regular communication with the learner and coordinated tracking to ensure progression towards graduation. Consistent, accurate and timely PLAR tracking also helps the board capture all eligible funding. Lastly, staff and students are made aware of PLAR through promotional strategies, like social media campaigns and off-site visits to affiliated organizations. The OCSB’s focus on improving PLAR has resulted in higher PLAR participation rates, which will likely result in a greater number of adult learners who graduate with a high school diploma.



KEY LESSONS LEARNED

The OCSB team reported that this was a very valuable project that positively impacted their staff and adult learners across many programs. The key lessons they learned were:

- Each team member represented a unique component of adult education, and the PLAR changes and results reflected a team approach to building bridges to a very diverse adult learning community
- Through this project, silos have been torn down and staff across many programs were communicating, collaborating, and sharing best practices and resources
- Capacity was built between credit and non-credit programs
- Efforts were made in the new PLAR process to build bridges with a diverse community of learners by recognizing their prior learning and life/work experiences

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PLAR PROJECT

This project allowed the OCSB team to overhaul their PLAR process, which had not been done in decades. Moving forward, the team will continue to review the PLAR process on a yearly basis to support continuous improvement. The team is confident the changes they made to their PLAR process will increase student achievement and engagement in the years to come.

PLAR ADVICE FOR OTHER BOARDS

Given that PLAR is an integral part of Adult Education, the entire PLAR process should be reviewed and updated regularly to determine changes, upgrades, and best practices that should be implemented to better serve a diverse community of adult learners. To support a PLAR review and update, a planning team should be established that incorporates a variety of staff roles (e.g., teachers, administrators, guidance counsellors, etc.) that enable adult learners to succeed.

CASE STUDY SEVEN: RENFREW COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



INTRODUCTION

The following case study details the mandate selected by the Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB) and describes the results of the implementation of their mandate of ensuring adult learners were supported in their pathway planning with an outcome of consistently applied Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR).

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD AND ADULT EDUCATION CONTEXT

The RCDSB is in the northeastern region of Ontario. The district follows the Ottawa River on the east and borders Algonquin Park to the southwest. The southern-most schools are in Arnprior and the northern-most school is in Deep River. RCDSB has seven secondary schools and 23 elementary schools. In addition, there are adult high schools and Programs for Alternative Learning (PAL) in Arnprior, Renfrew, Pembroke and Barry's Bay. Within RCDSB, Continuing Education has a reputation for high academic standards. RCDSB promote that they do things the "RCA Way" – and in doing so, are respectful, responsible, and caring. Former graduates, local businesses and the surrounding community support Continuing Education in all of its endeavours. Staff members encourage students to take a look at all that Continuing Education has to offer. As a school, they aim to:

- Provide each student with quality educational opportunities;
- Meet the individual needs of each student to the best of our collective abilities;
- Create an environment which encourages learning, furthers democratic principles and enhances positive human relations.

With these aims as a foundation, their programs and services have been built to meet the academic, physical, practical and artistic needs of their adult learners.

GUIDANCE AND PATHWAY PLANNING

Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB) self-selected the development and implementation of a pilot online process for regionally available guidance, career counselling and pathway planning for mature students working towards high school diploma or seeking prerequisites for post-secondary education mandate using Creating Pathways to Success (2013) as a guide with the overarching goal of ensuring adult learners were supported in their pathway planning with an outcome of consistently applied Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). At the same time, the Continuing Education registration form was standardized to help RCDSB improve coordinated information, intake, assessment and referral processes.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What features are necessary components of a pathway/service tracking document for both the school and the student?



PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The RCDSB team undertook a series of team meetings prior to commencing the innovative guidance and pathway planning project. Following these meetings, the RCDSB team completed the following project implementation phases:

- Assessed the current status of registrations,
- Compiled a list of stakeholders with contact information,
- Created interview questions and a schedule for interviews,
- Collated the results and designed the document,

After the ERPAE project meeting in November, it was decided to convene focus groups and surveys and look at how useful the data that they were collecting was. The RCDSB also began to research existing pathway documents, determine if any consents/ethics issues existed, and investigated LiveScribe software as a tool to capture qualitative data from the project. Subsequent steps from this stage were as follows:

- Created a Google Doc for project format,
- Convened two focus groups (one mostly education staff, one mostly external agencies),
- Produced a draft guidance and planning pathway document,
- The planning document was to be retained by the student and digitally at the Continuing Education site,
- Surveyed primary users and made modifications to the guidance planning document,
- Produced second draft which was product tested by RCDSB staff, and
- Refined final document and commenced full implementation.

This plan evolved from the initial submission with less emphasis placed on the components related to PLAR application than originally intended.

DATA COLLECTED

A significant challenge for the RCDSB Continuing Education team was that due to their very small team size they did not have the capacity to collect any significant research data during the implementation of the pilot project. Instead, the team concentrated their efforts and resources on creating and implementing the guidance planning document, recording their own reflections and anecdotal evidence through the implementation process. The team used a series of guiding questions allowing for an enriched conversation to support this data collection process, which they believe led to the creation of a more robust guidance pathway plan for their adult learners.

PILOT PROJECT RESULTS

The RCDSB team drew inspiration from one of the presentations during an ERPAE session by Sarah Delicate, who reinforced the notion that if the plan is put on the fridge, it is the student's plan, however, if the student does not have the plan at all, it remains the Board's plan. RCDSB followed that mantra in the design of their guidance planning document, by incorporating all of the necessary data that staff would need to support the individual adult learner in the first part of the plan, and providing a "takeaway" page for the adult learner to keep that recorded their intended destination, initials steps with timelines, next steps, and longer term planning. From the anecdotal evidence collected, the RCDSB team identified that:

- Adult learners felt that the Continuing Education staff were better able to understand their motivation and potential barriers to success, as they pursued their education and/or training goals,
- The one page outline of goals/next steps with timelines was easy to grasp and gave the adult learner a “take away” document which helped the adult learner to take ownership of the planning process,
- One adult learner asked for an extra copy to give to their mom to show that they were actually returning to school, saying, “she’ll be so proud,” reinforcing a sense of accomplishment for adults entering Continuing Education,
- Adult learners have something tangible and recorded to follow. This is important as it brings clarity and purpose to the adult learners planning and development, helping them navigate the complexity of programming and support that Continuing Education provides (e.g., PLAR, Literacy Basic Skills assessment, post-secondary requirements and pre-requisites, employment assessments, community connections),
- The Guidance and pathway planning pilot document provides a concise overview of the adult learner needs that could be shared (with appropriate permissions) to sponsor organizations (e.g., Ontario Works, Employment Services, Ontario Disability Support Program, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board), and
- Though full adoption of the pilot guidance planning document and process has not yet been achieved, and its penetration into adult learner’s experience not fully established, early feedback from adult learners is positive.

LESSONS LEARNED

A number of key lessons were learned by RCDSB through their participation in this pilot initiative, including:

- The RCDSB team experienced capacity building through teambuilding, persistence, resilience, time management, problem solving etc.,
- That a few fundamental decisions were required to influence the process – with limited time and project staff who needed to balance the everyday duties of their normal working roles, some compromise was necessary in regard to shaping the content and structure of the guidance and planning document,
- A challenge was creating a document that was all things for all people, and ultimately the RCDSB team settled on creating a planning document that they felt serves education goals rather than those of external agencies,
- At intake, there were considerable data that front line staff had been gathering about and for adult learners prior to the pilot project, but this data had never been formally recorded in a way that could provide a tangible record of goals and progress for the adult learner and the Continuing Education staff,
- Though Continuing Education staff had been doing an adequate job of identifying needs and pathways for students, there were some considerable gaps, including messaging (the what and when), and
- During the pilot project, staff identified a need to develop ways to gather the information from adult learners using a conversational approach, rather than merely reading from a checklist.



SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PILOT PROJECT

The RCDSB team believe that other district school boards could take the framework and principles of their guidance and planning document and modify it for their own system/purposes.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS CONSIDERING SIMILAR PILOT PROJECTS

The RCDSB team made some recommendations for other district school boards who may be considering similar guidance and pathway planning processes with their adult learners including:

- For RCDSB creating a tracking mechanism is a next step (we are using Google Docs but that is not very seamless with our Student Management System). Boards should consider how this can be embedded from the start as this impacts the structure and format of the planning document,
- There are other projects out there, with features that are enviable. However, costings should be undertaken for feasibility,
- Creating a format that can be shared across agencies and or platforms would be the most useful for document sharing. This has eluded the political and practical efforts of many up to this point.

THE RCDSB TEAM LEARNINGS FROM PROJECT PARTICIPATION

One of the major discoveries for the RCDSB team was how, through the purposeful coming together to undertake the pilot project, their team was task-oriented and perfectionist, they provided opportunities to capitalize on individual team skills and expertise, and how much pleasure they took in working alongside each other to execute the project. Importantly, the RCDSB team challenged their thinking in a collective and respectful manner as they successfully implemented the project.

A significant challenge was the inability to adhere to a research methodology due to a lack of available resources, through the team acknowledged having had marvelous support from the central project team, they still experienced a lack of time and expertise to collect and analyse data and still come up with an appropriate guidance and planning tool that could be used. A further challenge was that the RCDSB team will not know the full impact of the project until sufficient time and training has allowed for full adoption. The willingness and ability to use the document by their staff and the capacity and ability of the guidance and planning document to engage adult learners in the pathway planning process over both short and long term remains unknown.

The RCDSB team acknowledges that creating the pathway planning tool process was complex given the vast range of data and information gathering that is necessary during initial the intake phase with an adult learner. A number of related considerations such as what the document should look like, who should be gathering what data and information, what were the boundaries of specific staff in being responsible for the completion of the planning document, when was the right time to gather and share the data, and who should be able to access this information after it was gathered were perplexing to address, and remain ongoing.

CASE STUDY EIGHT: UPPER CANADA DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



INTRODUCTION

The following case study details the mandate selected by the TR Leger School of Adult, Alternative and Continuing Education within the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB).

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD AND ADULT EDUCATION CONTEXT

The UCDSB has 57 elementary schools, 21 secondary schools and TR Leger School of Adult, Alternative, and Continuing Education. The UCDSB spans 12,000 square kilometres, making the UCDSB one of the largest geographic school districts in Southern Ontario. TR Leger School of Adult, Alternative and Continuing Education was established in 1978 by the former Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Board of Education. The school is named after the former Director of the S.D. & G. Board, Rosaire Leger, who advocated both locally and provincially for the creation of the school. At TR Leger School, adult learners can:

- Create career pathways,
- Acquire skills for the 21st Century job market,
- Improve digital skills,
- Explore various occupations,
- Gain valuable work experience,
- Participate in apprenticeship programming,
- Prepare for college, apprenticeship, or university, Access the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Program (PLAR),

- Access Dual Credit courses, and
- Earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

Typically, the adult learners in TR Leger include:

- Adults of all ages,
- Employment Insurance (E.I.) recipients and Ontario Works participants,
- Displaced workers,
- Adolescent students requiring alternative education,
- Persons re-entering the world of work,
- Individuals resuming their education,
- Adults seeking Skills Training and Employment Preparation, and
- Newcomers to Canada learning English, Citizenship.

TR Leger has as its mission a commitment to

“provide a caring learning environment whereby staff, in conjunction with community partners, can offer engaging programs and services that help to prepare our students to transition into whatever pathway they choose, thus enabling them to become successful, contributing citizens.” To live out this mission TR Leger provides “all students access to engaging/experiential programming in a caring environment that enables each individual to grow and learn with increased resiliency to overcome obstacles and adapt to change.”



PILOT PROJECT BACKGROUND

TR Leger also holds a number of values:

- A Culture of Caring,
- Flexibility of programming to meet individualized needs,
- The Accessibility of our services throughout our largely rural geographic region,
- Supportive Colleagues – The collaboration amongst staff and between staff & our communities to support our student interests and help create pathways to success,
- Creating Pathways to independence. Our ability to offer programs that provide opportunities leading to independence such as Skills Training and Employment Preparation,
- Learning to Learn - Fostering interest towards increased learning, and
- Alternative Learning Models - Our ability to be responsive to the needs of a variety of learners through accelerated programs such as PLAR, Dual Credit, Co-op, Experiential Learning, and Cross-curricular course work.

FLEXIBLE DELIVERY

TR Leger School selected the development and implementation of a pilot project designed to regionally coordinate access to flexible delivery of EDU adult and Continuing Education programs that best meet adult learner needs mandate with the overarching goal of ensuring adult learners could access adult education programs across the school board district.

The UCDSB team utilized the findings from the ERPAE's environmental scan (Youmans, Godden, & Hummell, 2017), their own observations, observations of their community partners, and feedback from their students, to identify that access to adult education programs was a major barrier preventing students from pursuing adult education services from established TR Leger School sites. As a result, the UCDSB completed research which identified underserved communities that they felt might benefit from TR Leger School's educational services. UCDSB sought community partners within these communities who were willing to collaborate with TR Leger School to offer adult education opportunities. It was hoped that these identified community partners would work in cooperation with TR Leger School's staff to develop "hubs", to share resources and provide wraparound services to support learners with accessing TR Leger School's adult education programs. The UCDSB plan was to ensure that the hubs would include access to computers and internet Wi-Fi to allow for onsite face-to-face digital skills training as well as access to other online and blended learning opportunities for both credit and non-credit programs. It was expected that programs would be offered 1-2 days per week in these identified, underserved communities in order to offer a variety of adult education opportunities and necessary wraparound support services.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What other barriers exist, besides transportation, that affect students' abilities to participate in TR Leger School's adult education programs?
2. Will the creation of four additional adult education sites located in the rural, underserved communities of Cardinal, Lanark, Elgin, and Embrun remove the barriers that prevent adults from attending TR Leger School's adult education programs and pursuing their education goals?
3. Can the development of these additional sites enhance wraparound services needed by these students?

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The TR Leger School team undertook research to identify suitable remote communities that could collaborate with TR Leger School to offer educational opportunities in underserved areas. Subsequently, the team completed the following steps:

- In the spring of 2018 the TR Leger School team began research to identify potential itinerant sites;
- Using a map of TR Leger School, with existing Literacy Basic Skills/STEP* and Credit Campus locations listed, large underserved geographical areas were identified;
- Locations were identified within underserved areas (Westport, Merrickville, Front of Yonge-Mallorytown, Cardinal, Vankleek Hill, Avonmore, Alfred, Embrun/Russell, Ingleside, Lancaster, Williamstown, Portland, Delta, Elgin, Lanark, Lyndhurst, Augusta Township);

- Data was collected from interviews with township Chief Administrative Officers to create a snapshot of the communities they serve. Information and data from township municipalities were reviewed. This information included: a lack of regional public transportation, the need for skills training and upgrading, the need for a high school diploma, business development plans and employment opportunities, socio-economic characteristics, access to community service organizations and educational programs, demographics from the Statistics Canada Census concerning retirees, youth and the unemployed. Further measures to determine locations for underserved areas included the distance between existing TR Leger School campuses and proposed township or community sites;
- Criteria considered when choosing the itinerant site locations included: the access to free or low site rent, site availability (1-2 days per week) and accessibility, access to internet Wi-Fi and computers, an adult friendly atmosphere, an existing client base, and willingness on the part of community partners to collaborate to share resources and clients; and
- Appropriate locations and community partners willing to work in partnership were identified.

Ultimately, four locations to establish our itinerant STEP programs were then chosen, instructors were hired, schedules were set, needed supplies were provided and marketing and delivery of services began.

**Please note that TR Leger School's LBS program is called STEP: Skills Training and Employment Preparation program.*

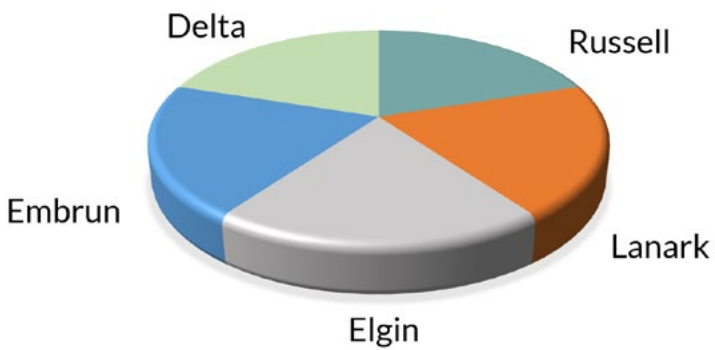


SITE LOCATIONS



**Due to the inability to find a suitable location, Cardinal was later removed from our list of itinerant STEP sites to develop.*

FINAL LOCATIONS OF THE PILOT SITES



PILOT PROJECT RESULTS ACROSS SITES

Lanark (North Lanark Community Health Centre)



Schedule: Tuesdays & Fridays (9:00am – 3:30 pm)

Enrolment: 6 students

Predominant Pathway: Independence

All learners were working on digital literacy:

- PowerPoint
- Spreadsheets
- Word
- Introduction to the Internet

Elgin (Rideau Lakes Public Library)



Schedule: Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays (9:00am – 1:00pm)

Enrolment: 11 students

Predominant Pathway: Employment

Learners were working on:

- Pre-employment curriculum
- Digital literacy:
 - PowerPoint
 - Spreadsheets
 - Word
 - Introduction to the Internet

Embrun #1 (Township of Russell Public Library)



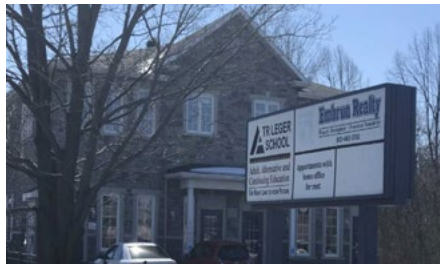
Schedule: September – December
Tuesdays and Thursdays
(9:00am – 3:30 pm)

Enrolment: 0 students

This location was not successful due to location and space:

- in a community library housed in a French elementary school
- located outside of the town centre
- small room located at the back of the library (with poor visibility)

Embrun #2 (783 Rue Notre Dame)



Schedule: January – May
Tuesdays and Wednesdays
(8:30am – 3:00 pm)

Enrolment: 2 students

New Location:

Located on the main street in the centre of town, close to grocery stores and Tim Hortons with the ability to have signage outside building.



Russell (Russell Meadows Retirement Community)



While in pursuit of a second location for the Embrun itinerant STEP site, a very helpful connection was made with a local developer/landlord who shared information about our pilot project, school and services with many people and organizations in both the Embrun and Russell communities. As a result, the UCDSB team discovered that there was great interest expressed by the staff from the Russell Meadows Retirement Community regarding TR Leger School's course offerings. A meeting was arranged between TR Leger School's staff and the staff at the Russell Meadows Retirement Community in order to explore the possibility of TR Leger School developing and delivering customized digital literacy training in a "Lunch and Learn" format for staff working at "The Meadows". Following this, two other community groups (The Horticultural Society and the +55 Volunteer Group) also requested that specific customized digital literacy training modules be developed and delivered to their members. Furthermore, many residents living at "The Meadows" expressed an interest in taking customized TR Leger School courses in order to gain a greater sense of independence through digital literacy training. This training is currently being delivered to twelve learners.

Delta (Rideau Lakes Public Library)



Schedule: January-May
Wednesdays and Fridays
(8:00am – 1:00 pm)

Enrolment: 0 students

Two students expressed interest in and were referred to other programs. One student became a full-time Credit Program student.

Connections made with the Rideau Lakes Public Library in Elgin resulted in a request by their staff for TR Leger School to open an additional itinerant STEP program at their sister site located at the Rideau Lakes Public Library in Delta.

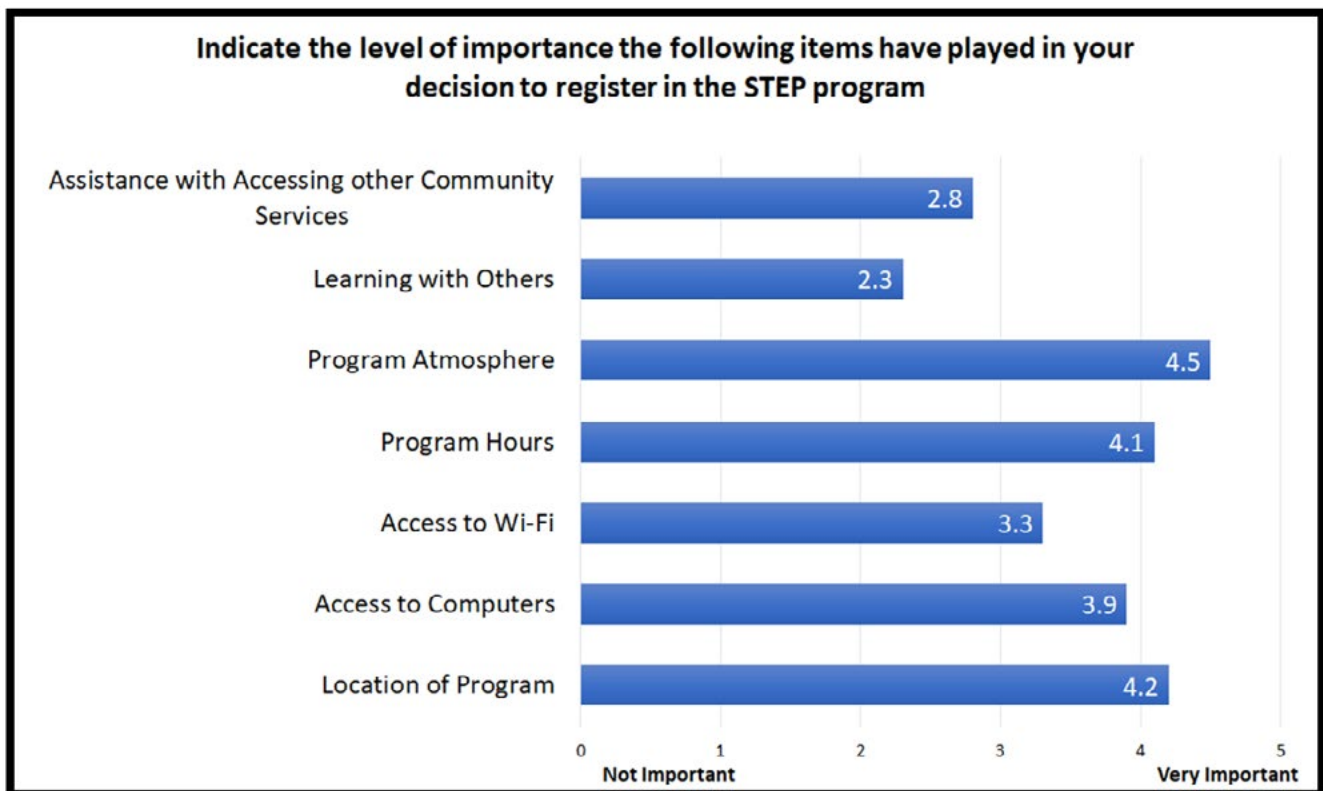
CONCLUSION

In total, 19 students who would not otherwise have accessed an educational program in an existing TR Leger School site, enrolled in the three new itinerant sites located in underserved communities. In addition, 12 additional participants living in Russell have accessed customized digital literacy training. Furthermore, an educational pathway bridging learners from the non-credit itinerant STEP program to the TR Leger Credit Program was developed and implemented by staff for 3 participants who are now pursuing their OSSD. PLAR, Co-op and credit courses were accessed by these students.

DATA COLLECTED

The UCDSB team administered a survey to their adult learners who revealed:

- When adult learners were asked how successful they felt in achieving their goals, on a scale of 1 (not successful) to 5 (very successful), the average was 4.4;
- 100% of the adult learners stated that they would return to this program if it were to continue in the fall;
- When asked if they would consider attending a different program in another community, adult learners responded that they would only do so if the itinerant STEP program did not offer the programming they required, otherwise they would remain in their communities;
- 100% of the adult learners stated that they would recommend the program to others;
- Adult learners indicated an interest in continuing to attend an average of 2-3 days per week if the programs were to continue;
- Prior to the itinerant STEP sites being established on a scale of 1 (not familiar) to 5 (very familiar), community partners indicated an average of 3.5 regarding how familiar they were with TR Leger School’s programs; and
- When adult learners were asked what had prevented them from previously attending an educational program, the students identified the following barriers:
 - transportation,
 - employment,
 - family responsibilities,
 - lack of computer/Wi-Fi, and
 - lack of computer skills.





LESSONS LEARNED

A number of key lessons were learned by UCDSB through their participation in his pilot initiative:

1. There is a need for more outreach to be conducted by TR Leger School's staff to provide more information regarding all TR Leger School programs /services offered. For example, through this pilot the UCDSB team learned that some respondents to the survey were aware of STEP, digital literacy training and the Credit Program, but were not aware of the LLEO career exploration curriculum, PLAR, Co-op Dual Credit or the format of the UCDSB's credit course delivery (E-learning and book based).
2. Ongoing marketing is crucial to effectively promote and grow the program, and would need to include: posters
 - Flyers
 - Social media,
 - Newspaper articles
 - Advertising, and
 - Regular meetings with partnering agencies
3. Adult learners confirmed that the team's hypothesis was correct: transportation was and is the most significant barrier preventing learners from pursuing educational services through established TR Leger School campuses.
4. Adult learners described through the itinerant STEP sites that they were most pleased with: "The small classes", the personalized and helpful" tutoring, and the "flexible options.
5. The right classroom space leads to success. Sites were most effective when they were:
 - Store front,
 - Located in an active, highly visible area,
 - Located near, or allow for cohabitation with, other agencies,
 - Are accessible,
 - Come furnished with WI-FI, and
 - Provide an adult, professional, friendly atmosphere.
6. Many community partners were enthusiastic and eager to work with TR Leger School, and were willing to refer clients, share resources, promote the adult and continuing education programs and broker other connections within the communities to expand programming. In Embrun, as a result of seeking a second location, a very important connection was made with a new landlord - a gentleman who is viewed as a pillar in the community with connections and positive influence with town councils, community groups and employers in both Embrun and Russell. This gentleman brokered a meetings between TR Leger School staff and Russell Meadows Retirement Community staff who requested the development and delivery of specific, customized digital literacy modules for their staff, residents and for two community groups. Similarly, connections made in Elgin, resulted in the development of a Delta itinerant STEP site. The Elgin connections also resulted in a request for the TR Leger School to expand into Westport where community agencies have agreed to partner in sharing a site and resources to create a new itinerant STEP site for September 2019.

7. Although the focus was on providing non-credit programming through the development of itinerant STEP sites in underserved communities, the pilot project established a need to develop and provide a bridging pathway to the TR Leger School Credit Program, for those learners seeking an OSSD.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PILOT PROJECT

At present TR Leger only has to pay rent in one location, and through resource and space sharing amongst community agencies the overall programming and delivery cost effectiveness of the flexible delivery are being kept low. In addition, the computers and materials purchased for the programs can be reused. The referrals that have occurred have resulted in STEP funding which can be used to finance the program. Finally, program promotion in these communities has raised the level of awareness of other TR Leger School programs.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS CONSIDERING SIMILAR PILOT PROJECTS

The TR Leger School team made a number of recommendations for other district school boards who may be considering similar flexible delivery processes and strategies with their adult learners including:

- Ensure you do adequate research to choose the right communities and geographic locations,
- Ensure that the site is accessible, safe, visible and adult-friendly, with computers and Wi-Fi,
- Share resources with other agencies and cohabitate if possible to create a “hub,”
- Staff who are connected with the community can move the programs forward in innovative ways,
- Provide staff mentoring to support newly hired instructors,
- Have current marketing tools ready for use immediately (flyers, posters, signage),
- Have staff network regularly with community referring partners and distribute marketing tools continuously,
- Be flexible and willing to customize programming,
- Be open to the needs of the students and assist with referrals to other programs, and
- Create and sustain a “culture of care” within each site.



SUMMARY OF THE INNOVATIVE BEST PRACTICE PILOT PROJECTS

The Ministry of Education Adult Education Strategy provided an opportunity for the ERPAA to explore innovative ways to promote a regional and collaborative approach among district school boards that fostered a shared responsibility toward adult learning and improved accountability for learner outcomes. To achieve this, four key areas were mandated by the Ministry of Education, with the ERPAA adding a fifth regionally developed one. From these five mandates, the eight participating district school boards each selected one they felt best aligned with meeting the needs of the adult learners in their board. In this summary section, we provide an overview of how the district school boards within the ERPAA responded to the five mandates, with commentary about the importance of each of the mandates in ensuring the Ontario adult education system addresses and supports the diverse needs of adult learners.

1. Enhanced positioning of adult education through building community awareness of Adult and Continuing Education Programs.

Despite the transformative nature of Adult Education (AE), it often has a negative stigma attached to it and people are unaware of the programs available in their local communities (Youmans, Godden, & Hummell, 2017). For this reason, the ERPAA added a fifth regional mandate to the four provincial Adult Education Strategy (AES) mandates about enhancing the position of Adult Education through building community awareness of Adult and Continuing Education programs. In reality, if people do not perceive Adult Education positively and know programs can be accessed in their communities at little or no cost, programs will be undervalued and underutilized.

Three of the eight participating school boards choose to pilot a Best Practice Innovative Project related to the Enhanced Positioning of Adult Education. It is interesting to note that all three projects had

a different focus, which highlights the range and diversity of work that can be done to raise the profile of ACE. The Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board worked with a professional marketing agency to develop a social media campaign. The marketing agency developed a positive slogan related to a former student's remark that Loyola had been her "ticket to success". The slogan was "Make Loyola your ticket to the future you want." The marketing campaign was a great way to promote an encouraging message about the life-changing nature of ACE.

In addition to working on an internal marketing campaign, the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO) focused on raising awareness about their Continuing Education programs within their own board. To do this, the CDSBEO team travelled to schools in their board and gave a short presentation about their programs during staff meetings. Many school board staff were unaware of the variety of programs offered by their board and were happy to be advocates of the programs. The work of CDSBEO affirms the importance of raising awareness of Adult Education within your board so that your colleagues can help promote your programs to parents of students and anyone else who could benefit from ACE.

To promote internal school board awareness about AE, the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) organized reciprocal classroom visits between credit and non-credit AE program staff. This was meant to build bridges between the programs and to equip staff with information needed to make effective referrals for adult learners. The OCDSB also developed relationships with their community partners and created a resource about the ACE programs available in Ottawa to support appropriate education referrals from their partners. The resource had pertinent information for credit and non-credit programs that included a program description, eligibility criteria, and suitability criteria. Although the intention of the resource was for community partners, it could also be used to help ACE staff during

the intake, assessment, and referral process. The OCDSB team recognized the importance of reaching out to community organizations to make them aware of the adult learning possibilities available for their clients.

As demonstrated by three of the ERPAE's innovative pilot projects, enhancing the position of adult education can be done through different methods. For example, community awareness can be developed through a professional marketing campaign, school board awareness can be increased through short ACE program presentations during school staff meetings and reciprocal classroom visits between credit and non-credit AE programs, and partnerships with community organizations can be developed and supported to enhance the referral process to ACE programs. In the future, it will be interesting to see how the ERPAE works collectively to further enhance the positioning of adult education.

2. Access to coordinated information, intake, assessment, and referrals at school boards to ensure learners are directed to the program or service that best meets their needs.

The results from our environmental scan (Youmans, Godden & Hummell, 2017) showed that most adult learners currently feel welcomed into AE in the ERPAE region, but there was a lack of consistency on how the intake process occurred within the eight member district school boards of the ERPAE. In particular, data from the environmental scan revealed that to best meet the academic, career pathway, and personal needs of adult learners, there should be qualified guidance staff available to all students enrolled in ACE at intake and throughout their learning program. In addition, it would be beneficial to have a comprehensive ACE intake process that identifies adult learners' past schooling experiences, ACE goals, the prerequisites they need to achieve their goals, and their progress towards their goals. The findings of our environmental scan concurred

with The Government of Ontario (2018) that intake processes must be sensitive to adult learners' prior learning and recognize skills and knowledge from formal and informal learning situations and experiences.

Quinte Adult Education (QAE), part of the Hastings and Prince Edward County District School Board (HPEDSB), was keen to respond to this mandate and designed and tested a new online intake and registration process intended to retain and increase the number of adult learners entering ACE programs as their Innovative Best Practice Project. The results of the QAE pilot suggested that adult learners liked having the flexibility to complete an online, rather than paper-based, process for registration. The online process helped with providing a more streamlined feedback and connection between adult learner and teacher, however the face-to-face meetings were still crucial. Take-away messages were that the technology should be used to complement the existing highly personalised service that ACE provides.

3. Regional guidance, career counselling and pathway planning for mature students working towards a high school diploma or seeking prerequisites for postsecondary education.

The results from our environmental scan (Youmans, Godden & Hummell, 2017) showed that given the pivotal role guidance staff in ACE play in supporting adult learner needs, adult learners require ongoing guidance and pathway planning support. However, guidance in ACE provision across the ERPAE region was inconsistent, with variability in whether adult learners had access to guidance and pathway planning provision (Youmans, Godden, & Hummell, 2017). For example, adult learners participating in on-site ACE programs typically had greater access to guidance staff than adult learners taking online courses or eLearning programs. The Government of Ontario (2018), responding to the AE discussion paper of 2017, highlighted that coordinated pathways help



adult learners “easily navigate between the programs that best help them achieve their goals and transition to their next step, whether that is education, further training and/or employment” (para, 17). An important finding of the Government consultation was that many adult learners would not likely have enrolled in their programs if it were not for the support and care shown by guidance counsellor support with pathway planning.

Given the importance of effective guidance and pathway planning, Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB) self-selected this mandate for their Innovative Best Practice Project. Through their pilot, RCDSB developed a tangible and straightforward process of tracking with a pathway planning tool that helped adult learners navigate the complexity of programming in ACE. Adult learners responded very positively to the document, finding it easy to understand and implement alongside their learning. Crucially, adult learners felt that the ACE staff were better able to understand their motivation and potential barriers to success, as they pursued their education and/or training goals.

4. Regionally coordinated access to consistent Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for Mature Students working towards a high school diploma.

Adults often enter Adult and Continuing Education programs with a wealth of work and life experience. The process of Prior Learning Recognition & Assessment (PLAR) enables ACE programs to grant credit equivalencies for knowledge and skills acquired by adults through the workplace and their life journeys. The PLAR mandate outlined in the Adult Education Strategy identifies regionally coordinated access to consistently applied PLAR as a priority.

St. Nicholas Adult High School in the Ottawa Catholic School Board took great strides to improve their PLAR process to make it more student-centred

and accessible. These updates included: developing a process so that all students are made aware of PLAR upon registration, making PLAR assessments available online, creating a Senior PLAR survey for students to complete to learn more about their life and work experiences for credit granting purposes, and making ACE staff aware of the PLAR process and its benefits. As a result of their PLAR changes, the OCSB reported a 41% increase in the number of students who completed PLAR, compared to the previous year. This is promising because PLAR supports higher graduation rates. As school boards in the ERPAE, like the OCSB, work on optimizing their PLAR process they are developing best practices that the region should consider adopting and applying.

5. Regionally coordinated access to flexible delivery of EDU Adult and Continuing Education programs and/or services (e.g., e-learning or hybrid delivery programs) that best meet adult learner needs.

The wide variance of ACE programs across the ERPAE region was emphasized through the environmental scan (Youmans, Godden, & Hummell, 2017). This is a complex area, as in order to best meet adult learner needs, variability and flexibility in delivery of programs is essential. The response to the Government discussion paper of 2017 highlighted that access to programming is indeed patchy across Ontario, with learners in more rural areas like the eastern Ontario region, experiencing gaps in service (Government of Ontario, 2018). It was suggested that leveraging existing networks and partnerships could provide solutions to the vexing problem of ensuring adequate provision of delivery across all regions.

With this in-mind, two district school boards within the ERPAE responded to the mandate of examining how regionally coordinated access to programming could be achieved. Limestone District School Board (LDSB) sought to extend the math learning of primary students at one of their elementary schools by engaging parents in a program that equipped them

with mathematics knowledge and skills needed to work with their own children using the Literacy and Numeracy Register. Through this work, the LDSB team connected interested parents with the appropriate ACE programming, encouraging the parents to work towards gaining their OSSD. LDSB found that parents appreciated the “community” feel of this learning environment, and the project had the scope to be extended to all elementary schools across the LDSB.

The second response to this mandate came from the TR Leger School of Adult, Alternative and Continuing Education within the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB), who sought to identify underserved communities that might benefit from their ACE services and programming. Through their Innovative Best Practice Project, TR Leger found that many community partners were enthusiastic and eager to work with them by providing an offsite location, referring clients, sharing resources, promoting ACE programs, and brokering other connections within the communities to expand programming. Adult learners responded very positively to being able to access ACE programs in their immediate locale, with a significant number of them stating they would return and take additional programs in the fall of 2019.

Although the Innovative Best Practice Projects piloted in the ERPAE were very diverse, they were all aimed at improving AE programs and practices in school boards to support the educational outcomes of adult learners. School boards focused their projects on one of the four AES mandates or the regional mandate of enhancing the positioning of adult education. By piloting innovative projects in all eight school boards, the ERPAE has developed a range of best practices that the regional partnership and others can draw upon. As a next step, the ERPAE is considering the implementation of a regional project related to one of the four AES mandates.

With careful attention to research, policy, and regional needs, and through consultation with DSBs, ERPAE designed a regional project and submitted a request for funding to the Ministry of Education.



BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

This report described the innovative work undertaken by the ERPAE during year three of the Adult Education Strategy (AES), namely the successful execution of eight rich and diverse Innovative Best Practice Projects by participating member district school boards. The AES was intended to:

1. Promote a regional and more collaborative approach among school boards to foster a shared responsibility for adult learning that will improve accountability for learner outcomes,
2. Ensure availability of a wide range of accessible program delivery options and supports that are responsive to adult learner needs, and
3. Improve the transitions for learners between Ministry of Education adult credit programs and programs funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (previously called the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development) and the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

It enabled the ERPAE to conduct an environmental scan of the AE programs in their region, develop a strategic regional plan, facilitate capacity building sessions for its members, and execute innovative best practice projects in each of the eight participating school boards. The ERPAE is grateful for the direction and financial support of the Ontario Ministry of Education in the formation and growth of their partnership. During this three-year initiative, the ERPAE research team worked collaboratively with the ERPAE Coordinator and its membership to establish a well-documented record of their accomplished activities, processes, and learnings. Data collection and analysis have enabled the Partnership to monitor and evaluate its progress in achieving both the goals of the ERPAE Strategic Plan and the overarching goals of the AES initiative. It has also allowed the region to showcase their valuable and innovative work. This report is the final contribution to this extensively documented record.

The focus of the ERPAE’s valuable work can be best summarized in the conceptual model shown in Image 2, A Visual Conceptualization of ACE in the ERPAE. The four mandates outlined in the AES are at the centre of this visualization, acknowledging their fundamental role in ACE provision, programing, and delivery. Placed around these mandates are four AE theoretical foundations: the positioning of ACE (the fifth regionally established mandate), what ACE does, how ACE works, and how ACE is delivered. Framing and underpinning all of the mandates are the values held by the ERPAE members. These values were determined early in the ERPAE’s work together (see Youmans, Godden, & Hummell, 2017) and they remain at the heart of ACE, guiding the ERPAE’s collective pursuit of providing effective and efficient programs to support the educational and life outcomes of all adult learners.

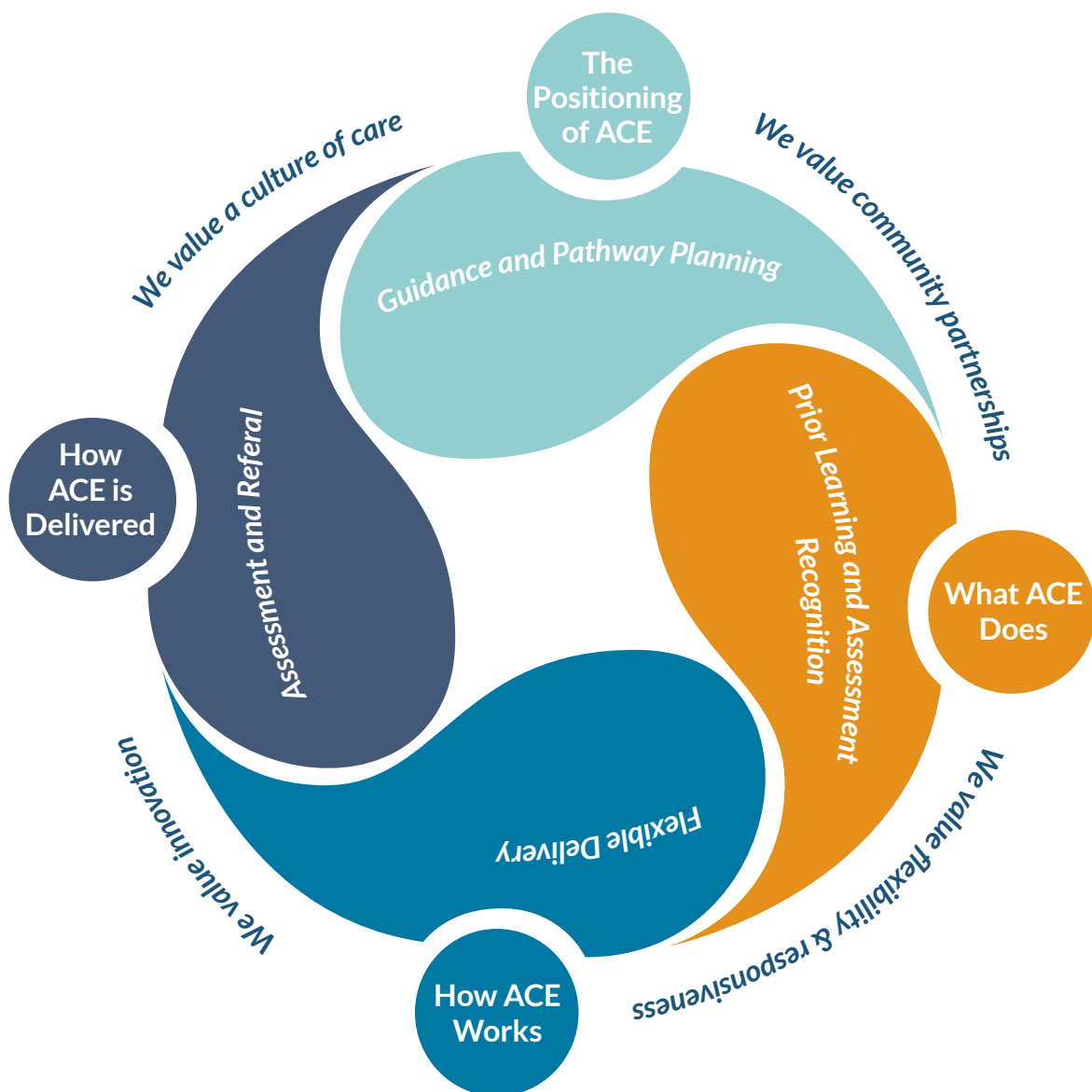


IMAGE 2: A VISUAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ACE IN THE ERPAE



A vast amount of evidence has confirmed that adult education has significantly changed lives for the better (e.g., European Association for the Education of Adults, 2015; Hughes & Adriaanse, 2018; Hughes, Barnes & Adriaanse, 2016; UNESCO, 2016; World Bank, 2019). Benefits that result from participation in AE are multi-faceted. For example, positive employment outcomes from participation in adult education programs are widely reported (e.g., Field, 2012; Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins, Vignoles, Wolf, & Galindo-Rueda, 2003; Zhang & Palameta, 2006). Moreover, adult learning is seen as an important contributing mechanism for helping adults cope with shifts and changes to the future of work (World Bank, 2019). With respect to positive community impact, it has been documented that AE engages citizens in voting, volunteering, and taking active roles in society (e.g., OECD, 2016).

“As economies rejig to provide the human capital of the next generation, the current working-age population becomes anxious about its job prospects. One step toward lessening this anxiety is adult learning aimed at supplying workers who are not in school or in jobs with new or updated skills. Adult learning is an important channel for readjusting skills to fit in the future of work.”

(World Bank, 2019, p. 81)

Amidst all of these positive outcomes, the benefits to individuals must not be overlooked. Adult education makes a powerful contribution to both individual and family health and well-being, with compelling evidence of this reported by the World Health Organization (2016), UNESCO (2016), and Hughes and Adriaanse (2018). The work of the ERPAE has significantly added to the body of evidence about the value of AE in the lives of individuals and communities. We can categorically state that adult education transforms lives for the better. We believe that our visual conceptualization of ACE in the ERPAE provides an effective summary of how this is achieved. We concur with Hughes, Barnes & Adriaanse (2016) in their assertion that there are too many adults who are not able to reach their full potential and that adult education provides a much-needed solution. Consequently, we urge Government at Provincial and Federal levels to consider enacting a series of policies and practices to ensure that the value of adult education is acknowledged, AE partnerships are nurtured and expanded in support of promising practices, and that AE programs are made widely available for all adults, particularly those who would benefit from them the most.

REFERENCES

- Alberta Teachers' Association. (2000). *Action research guide for Alberta teachers*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Teachers' Association.
- European Association for the Education of Adults. (2015). *Manifesto for adult learning in the 21st century*. Brussels: 5th December 2015. Retrieved from: <http://www.eaea.org/en/policy-advocacy/manifesto-for-adult-learning-in-the-21st-century.html>
- Hughes, D., Adriaanse, K., & Barnes, S-A. (2016). *Adult education: Too important to be left to chance*. London, UK: All Party Parliamentary Group for Adult Education.
- Hughes, D., & Adriaanse, K. (2018). *Adult education: Important for health and well-being*. London, UK: Institutes for Adult Learning.
- Field, J. (2012). Is lifelong learning making a difference? Research-based evidence on the impact of adult learning, in D. Aspen, J. Chapman, K. Evans, & R. Bagnall, (eds.). *Second international handbook of lifelong learning*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer
- Godden, L., Youmans, A., & Hummell, F. (2018). *Affirming, learning, and yearning: Sharing and developing innovative best practices within and outside of the ERPAE region*. The Eastern Regional Partnership for Adult Education, Eastern Ontario Staff Development Network.
- Jenkins, A. (2006). *Women, lifelong learning and transitions into employment*. *Work, Employment & Society*, 20(2), 309-328.
- Jenkins, A., Vignoles, A., Wolf, A., & Galindo-Rueda, F. (2003). *The determinants and labour market effects of lifelong learning*. *Applied Economics*, 35, 1711-1721.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2016). *Skills matter: Further results from the survey of adult skills*. OECD Skills Studies, Paris, FR: OECD Publishing.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2016). *Building skills for all: A review of England – Policy insight from the survey of adult skills*. Paris, FR: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd.org/unitedkingdom/building-skills-for-all-review-of-england.pdf>
- Minister of Industry. (2013). *Skills in Canada: First results from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)*. Statistics Canada, ON: Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics Division.
- The Government of Canada. (2019). *Building a nation of innovators*. Ottawa, ON: Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.
- The Government of Ontario. (2014). *Achieving excellence: A renewed vision for education in Ontario*. Toronto, ON: Ministry of Education, Queen's Printer for Ontario.



- The Government of Ontario. (2017). *Strengthening Ontario's adult education system: Consultation Paper*. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- The Government of Ontario. Improving adult education. (2018). *What we heard from December 2017 to February 2018 about ways to improve adult learning in Ontario*. Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/report-improving-adult-education>
- Schmuck, R. A. (1997). *Practical action research for change*. Arlington Heights, IL: IRI/Skylight Training and Publishing.
- UNESCO. Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). (2016). *3rd global report on adult learning and education*. Hamburg, DE: The Impact of Adult Learning and Education on Health and Well-Being; Employment and the Labour Market; and Social, Civic and Community Life.
- World Bank. (2019). *World development report 2019: The changing nature of work*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2019>
- World Health Organisation. (2016). *Mental health and older adults, fact sheet, April 2016*. Retrieved from: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs381/en/>
- Youmans, A., Godden, L., & Hummell, F. (2017). *Strategic plan 2017-2019*. The Eastern Regional Partnership for Adult Education, Eastern Ontario Staff Development Network. Retrieved from https://www.eosdn.on.ca/sites/eosdn.on.ca/files/strategic%20plan%20FINAL_0.pdf
- Youmans, A., Godden, L., & Hummell, F. (2017). *An environmental scan of adult and continuing education in the eastern Ontario region*. The Eastern Regional Partnership for Adult Education, Eastern Ontario Staff Development Network. Retrieved from https://www.eosdn.on.ca/sites/eosdn.on.ca/files/envrionmental%20scan%20FINAL_0.pdf
- Zhang, X., & Palameta, B. (2006). *Participation in adult schooling and its earnings impact in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada

