

Reconnect & Renew
Renouer et rebondir

CESBA Conference | Conférence de CESBA

November 23-25 | 23-25 novembre

Supporting Adult Learners in Credit
Programs: Successes & Opportunities

with

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Adult & Continuing Education is Transformative

Adult & Continuing Education programs have the power to transform adults by equipping them with the skills they need for success in life, work, and further education.



Overarching Research Question

How are adult learners supported in their learning and achievement (e.g., career pathway planning, PLAR, etc.) through Adult & Continuing Education (A&CE) credit programs across the province?

Data Collection

Online surveys were developed and distributed for:

1. Adult learners
2. Teachers, instructors, and guidance counsellors
3. Administrators

Survey Topics

- PLAR
- Adult learner supports and enablers
- Adult learner challenges and barriers
- Best practices and innovations for supporting adult learner success

Survey Sample – Board Level

Responses were received from 18 school boards in Ontario

Region	# of Boards
Eastern Ontario	8
Northern Ontario	4
Western Ontario	3
Central Ontario	2
Toronto	1

Survey Sample – Participant Level

Participant Type	# of Participants
Adult Learners	296
Teachers/Instructors/Guidance Counsellors	64
Administrators	17

Successes



Awareness of A&CE

The main ways adult learners reported finding out about A&CE were:

- Friends and family
- Online search/research
- Known in the community
- Community partners

Program-Related Successes

The following helped adult learners stay committed to A&CE:

- Supportive A&CE staff
- Positive learning environment
- Flexible programs

Teacher Support

Teachers identified supporting adult learners through:

- Extra learning support
- Regular check-ins/communication with adult learners
- A positive classroom environment

Learning Supports

Eighty (80)% of adult learners reported receiving one or more learning support. The most frequently used learning supports reported by adult learners were:

- Guidance counselling
- Basic skills development
- Technology support
- Tutoring

PLAR

Adult learners reported positive experiences with PLAR:

“It was a good experience as it got me that much closer to graduating which, at the time felt like it was going to take forever.”

“It was great to have my life experiences recognized and to have them count towards my diploma.”

The Influence of PLAR

Table 14. Administrator Comments About the Positive Influence of PLAR on Adult Learners

The Influence of PLAR on Adult Learners

“[PLAR] provides hope, encouragement, and confidence to begin and stick with their studies. [Adult learners] are often very surprised realizing they are closer to their OSSD than they every realized.” – Principal

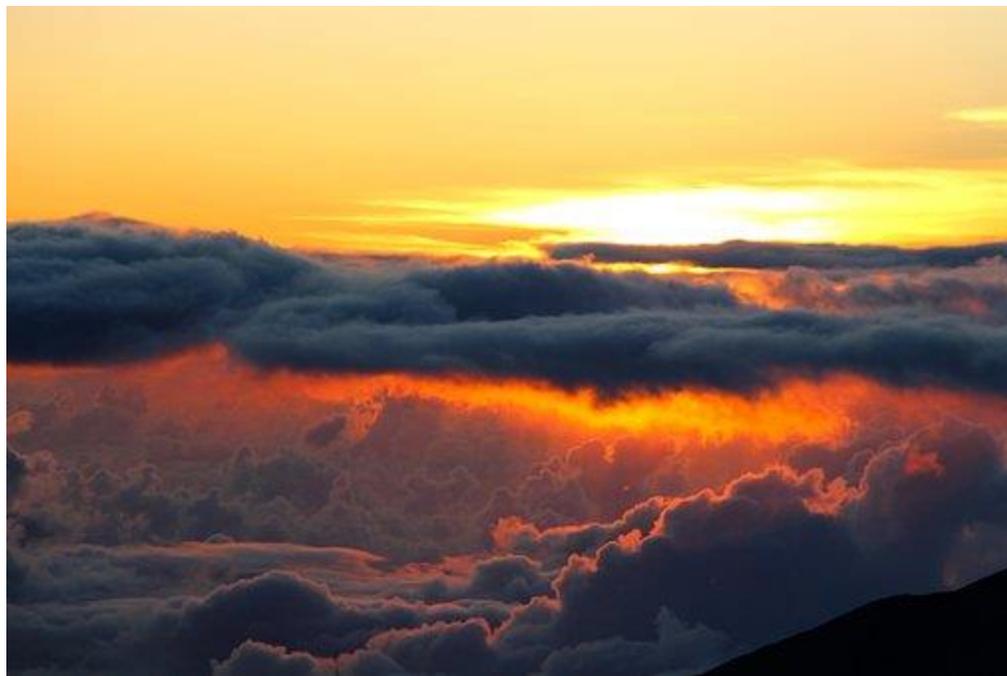
“PLAR gives our adult learners motivation and optimism. They realize that this process truly is a recognition of their life story and what they have learned along the way. The elusive diploma feels more attainable.” – Vice-principal

“It's a game-changer. Adults who return to school with very few credits cannot spend 1-2-3 years of their lives 'catching up...they need to see light at the end of the tunnel clearly....and with a plan. PLAR offers that plan.” – Principal

Partnerships

Partnerships between non-credit (e.g., LBS and ESL) and credit pathways promoted adult learner success.

Opportunities



Greater Participation in A&CE

Adult learners reported that the following would make it easier for adults to participate in A&CE:

- Greater program flexibility
- Increased awareness of A&CE
- More learner supports
- Improve the quality of adult education

Flexible Programming

School boards with limited modes of delivery should consider expanding their services and look to innovative approaches (e.g., partnering with community sites, hybrid learning).

Increase A&CE Awareness

The benefits of A&CE need to be made more widely known so that it does not heavily rely on word-of-mouth referrals and individual research.

Supports

According to A&CE administrators and teachers, there are underlying reasons (e.g., learning disabilities, mental health challenges, etc.) adult learners returning to complete a high school diploma were not initially successful.

Adult learners should have access to comprehensive learning and holistic supports to foster their success. There is currently wide variation in the supports offered by different school boards in Ontario.

Table 11. Learning supports provided for adult learners by school boards

School Board/ Institution	Learning Supports Provided for Adult Learners						Total
	Tutoring	Basic skills development	Individualized programming	Guidance counselling	Skills inventory	Technology support	
1			✓	✓		✓	3
2		✓		✓*		✓	3
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
4		✓	✓	✓*	✓	✓	5
5	✓		✓	✓		✓	4
6		✓	✓		✓	✓	4
7	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	5
8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
10	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	5
11		✓	✓	✓*		✓	4
12	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
13	✓	✓	✓	✓			4
14		✓	✓		✓		3
15			✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Total	8	12	14	13	8	13	

Note: The symbol ✓* indicates that there was either a limited availability of professional guidance counselling (part-time) or a lack of professional guidance counselling available.

Table 12. Holistic supports provided for adult learners by school boards

School Board/ Institution	Holistic Supports Provided for Adult Learners						Total
	Transportation	Mental health support	Food	Childcare availability	Clothing	Referrals to other agencies	
1			✓		✓	✓	3
2			✓			✓	2
3		✓	✓		✓	✓	4
4	✓	✓	✓				3
5		✓					1
6							0
7						✓	1
8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
9		✓		✓		✓	3
10	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	5
11	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	5
12				✓		✓	2
13	✓						1
14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
15		✓	✓	✓		✓	4
Total	6	9	9	5	6	11	

Partnerships

Partnerships between non-credit (e.g., LBS and ESL) and credit pathways should be strengthened and encouraged.

PLAR

Only 54% of adult learners surveyed knew what PLAR was. School boards need to ensure that PLAR eligible adult learners obtain their diploma in a time efficient manner.

Specialized Training

Supportive teachers and guidance counsellors play an important role in successful program completion; given that working with adults is very different than working with children, A&CE staff would benefit from specialized training.

Funding for Capacity Building

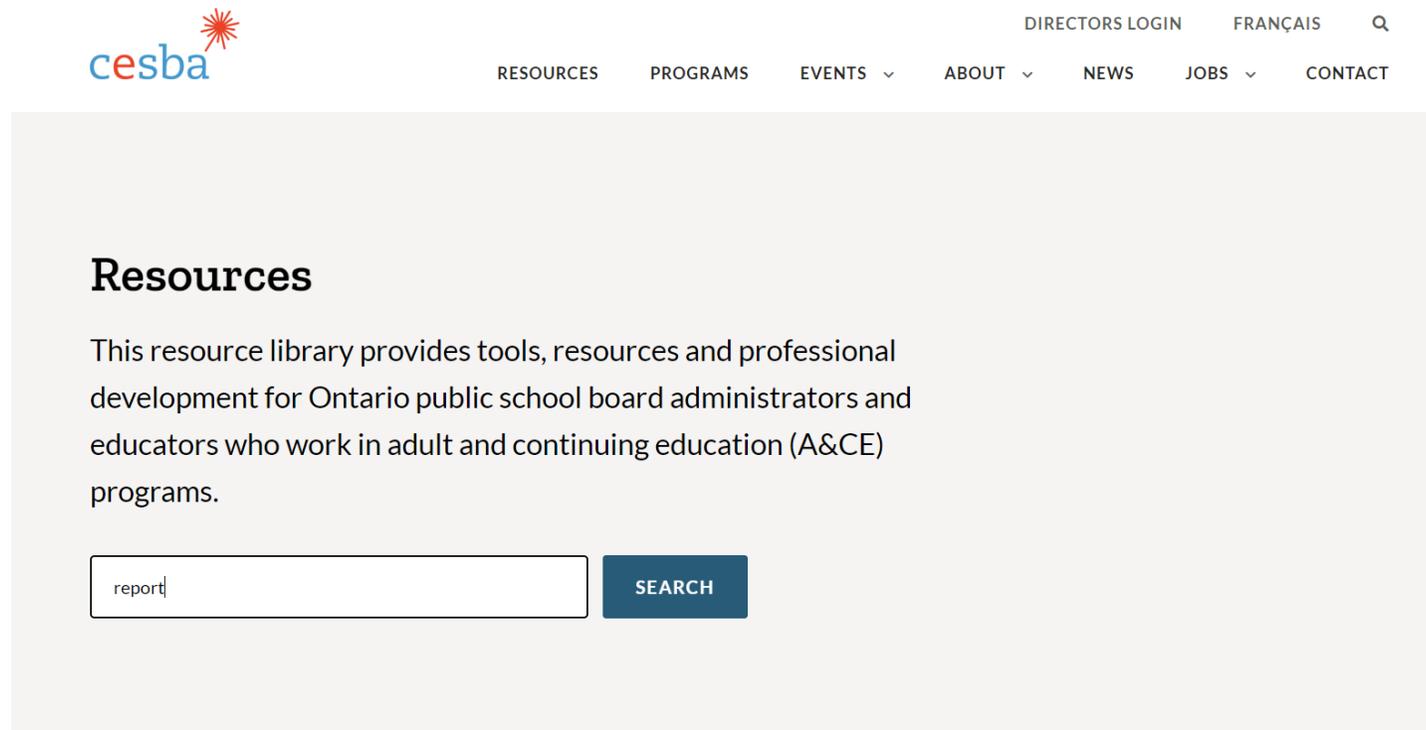
A&CE is an important field of education that requires funding to develop capacity in staff to strengthen adult learner achievement and outcomes.

Adult-Centered Learning

Greater investments should be made in adult-centred learning and programs (e.g., dual-credit, co-op, and school to work programs).

Research Report

The research report will be made available on the CESBA website.



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Resources

This resource library provides tools, resources and professional development for Ontario public school board administrators and educators who work in adult and continuing education (A&CE) programs.

[SEARCH](#)



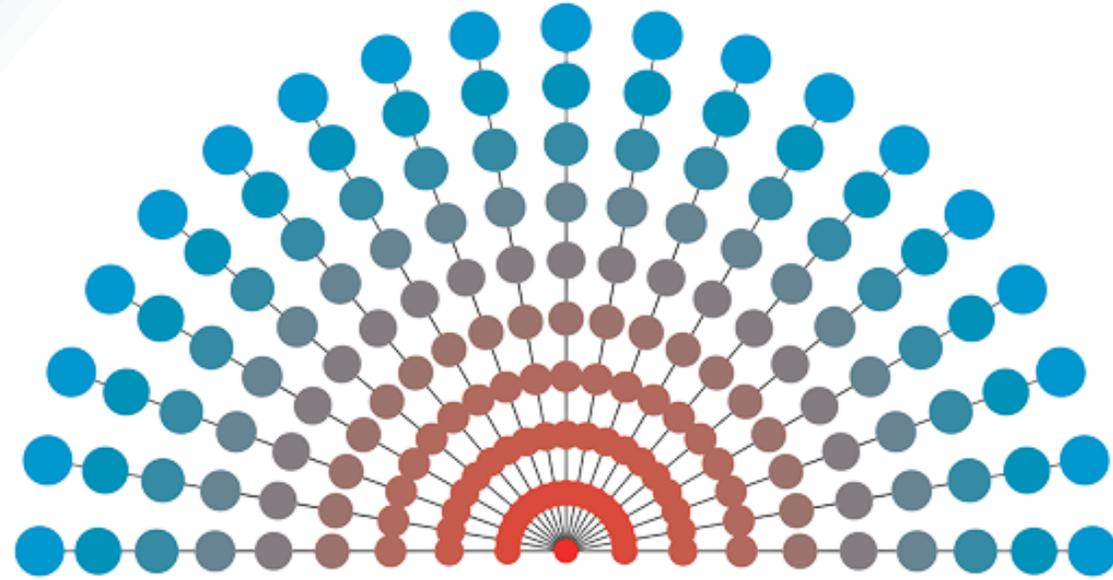
Questions and Comments



Current Research

We are currently working on a Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) and Credit Program Scan on behalf of CESBA.

If you would be willing to answer an online survey for CESBA about this project, please email me at sandy.youmans@queensu.ca



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