Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) and Credit Programs Scan of Ontario School Boards:
Final Report

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cesba

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About the Authors

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

Introduction

CESBA works to provide adult and continuing education ("A&CE") program staff working in Ontario's school boards with the knowledge, skills and abilities to assist learners in achieving their education and employment goals. There are numerous sectors in the A&CE environment, the Literacy and Basic Skills ("LBS") program being one very important sector that CESBA supports. LBS programs are supported by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration Training and Skills Development funding to both the individual school board LBS programs as well as CESBA itself to be the supportive, capacity-building organization. There are numerous gaps in the research for this sector and very little research that directly or indirectly increases our understanding of the Ontario system or its adult students. One important area to explore in A&CE is the adult learner pathway between non-credit programs, like LBS and credit granting programs. LBS programs offered through district school boards provide the opportunity to explore how adult learners in such programs are equipped and encouraged to transition into credit programs.

Features of the LBS Program

Established in 1997, the LBS program is an important component of Ontario's employment and training provision within adult education systems (Government of Ontario, 2019). Foundational literacy skills are crucial to individuals, as they facilitate the achievement of: sustainable employment outcomes; full participation in further education, training, and skills development; the pursuit of career goals; increased personal independence; and active involvement in community and broader societal life.

Service providers and support organizations come together to contribute to the Employment Ontario (EO) Service Promise of creating opportunities (either directly or indirectly) for adults to improve their literacy and basic skills and be informed about other relevant EO programs. LBS Service Providers provide adult learners with specific programing to help adults develop and apply communication, numeracy, and digital skills as they achieve their discretely determined learning goals and prepare for their next steps. A raft of supports are provided by support organizations that help ensure learners are individually supported to help ensure their learning goals are successfully met.

The LBS program is focussed on supporting adults living in Ontario who are unemployed, with a focus on those in receipt of income support, and it is also open to employed Ontarians who wish to improve their literacy and basic skills to maintain or upgrade their employability. Divided into four cultural streams customized for Anglophone, Deaf, Francophone, and Indigenous learners, LBS helps adults reach their intended outcomes of employment, post-secondary education, apprenticeship, secondary school credit, or independence.

The Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF)

The Ontario and Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) outlines how the LBS program is structured as a competency-based program that is purposefully designed to help adult learners meet their learning objectives. The OALCF is intended to help service providers find ways to deliver:

- learner-centred transition-orientated programing

- learning that is rooted in adult education principles

- formal and informal assessment activities

- goal-path descriptions

- task-based programming and assessment

- program planning, completion, and learner transitions

The OALCF links the LBS program to the requirements of employers, educational and training service providers, and community partners through standards related to the labour market and broader educational and training systems. LBS has a mandate to partner with multiple organizations to better meet the needs of their clients (Government of Ontario, n.d.). Examples of these organizations include:

- School boards (including co-terminus school boards)

- Local colleges

- Community services (e.g., Safe Homes for Youth, local library, Community Living)

- Employment programs (e.g., Reach for Success, Connections)

- Non-credit programs (e.g., ESL/LINC)

- Literacy service providers

- Indigenous support organizations (e.g., Can-Am Friendship Centre, Connections)

- Health organizations (e.g., Centre for Addiction and Mental Health)

- Immigrant services

- Non-profit organizations (e.g., Tropicana Community Services, John Howard Society)

- Local unions

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to determine the number of school board LBS programs offered in the province of Ontario, investigate the nature of the referral processes within their non-credit and credit programs, and examine how adult learners enrolled in LBS programs are supported in credit programs or assisted to transition into credit programs. The overarching purpose for this investigative focus was to highlight worthwhile practices for supporting adult learners to transition from LBS (non-credit) programs to credit program pathways. Subsequently, the study sought to respond to the following research questions that guided this project:

- How many school board LBS programs are there across the province of Ontario?
- How many school board LBS programs have relationships with credit programming? What is the nature of the relationship?
- How are LBS learners referred to LBS programs?
- How are adult learners enrolled in school board LBS programs supported in credit programs or assisted to transition into credit programs?
- What role does guidance (or other) staff have in helping adult learners transition from LBS to credit programs?
- How are adult learners enrolled in LBS programs at school boards made aware about PLAR?

Data Collection Methods and Tools

To respond to the first research question of how many school boards in Ontario offer LBS programs, the researchers sought to obtain a list from a government agency. It was unanticipated that a list of school boards that provide LBS was not readily available. To develop such a list, the 16 Learning Networks of Ontario were asked to confirm how many district school boards in their region offered the LBS program (see https://learningnetworks.ca/contact-my-network/). Fifteen out of 16 responded directly to the researchers about the school boards in their region, and information for the final region's school board provision was obtained through their website.

For the remaining research questions examining the working relationship between LBS and credit, data collection was undertaken primarily through an online survey distributed to LBS program managers, where they were asked to provide an overview of their program and the nature of its relationship with credit programming. In addition, A&CE administrators (e.g., A&CE principal or vice-principal) and staff were also asked to complete an online survey to offer insights about the relationship between non-credit and credit programming within their school board.

Participants who completed the survey were also invited to participate in an interview, to gain deeper insights into the nature of the relationship between LBS programs and credit programs. In total, thirteen qualitative interviews were conducted, interviews were undertaken on Zoom, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcribed data were deductively coded, looking for key terms aligned to the research questions that were focused on examining the relationship between LBS and credit programs. To respond to the first research question, the researchers sought to clearly

establish how many district school boards offer the LBS program across the province. It was surprising that a list of school boards that provide LBS was not readily available. To develop such a list, the 16 Learning Networks of Ontario were asked to confirm how many district school boards in their region offered the LBS program (see https://learningnetworks.ca/contact-my-network/). Fifteen out of 16

In total, the participants in this study represented 21 schools board in Ontario from a potential pool of 34 boards that offer the LBS programs. The regional representation of school boards was as follows: 9 from the West, 5 from the East, 4 from Central, 2 from North, and 1 from Toronto (see Table 1).

Table 1. Regional Representation of School Boards

Region	Number of School Boards
Central	4
Toronto	1
West	9
East	5
North	2

LBS and Credit Programs Scan Findings

"I can't tell you how many times I stand at the back of the adult credit graduation and I say I know that person. I know that person because they have been through my LBS program at some point." (Interview 3)

Introducing the Findings

In total, 34 district school boards provide LBS programs across Ontario. The regional breakdown of school board provision for LBS is as follows: the North has five, the West has 14, the East has 8, and Central has 9 (see Table 2). Two school boards (i.e.,

Simcoe County District School Board and Upper Grand District School Board) offer LBS

provision in two regions (Central and West).

Table 2. Literacy and Basic Skills Programs Offered in Ontario School Boards by Region

Region	School Boards	# of School Boards Per Region
North	Algoma District School Board Conseil Scolaire Catholique de District des Grandes-Rivières Near North District School Board Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board Sudbury Catholic District School Board	5
West	Avon Maitland District School Board* District School Board of Niagara Grand Erie District School Board Greater Essex District School Board Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board Hamilton Wentworth District School Board Lambton Kent District School Board London Catholic District School Board Niagara Catholic District School Board Simcoe County District School Board Thames Valley District School Board Upper Grand District School Board Waterloo Catholic District School Board Waterloo Region District School Board	14
East	Algonquin Lakeshore Catholic District School Board Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board Limestone District School Board Ottawa Carleton School Board Ottawa Catholic District School Board Renfrew County District School Board Trillium Lakelands District School Board Upper Canada District School Board	8
Central	Durham Catholic District School Board Durham District School Board Halton Catholic District School Board Peel District School Board Simcoe County District School Board (also in the West) Toronto Catholic District School Board Toronto District School Board Upper Grand District School Board (also in the West) York Region District School Board	9

Note: These regions are used by the Learning Networks of Ontario.

*Avon Maitland District School Board is the only school board that offers an online LBS program (e-Channel service) for Anglophones in Ontario.

As data were analyzed to respond to the remaining research questions, we observed many commonalties across both data sources, which were synthesized into a *framework of worthwhile practices* based upon three overarching themes; *shared vision*, *professional coordination*, and *learner success* illustrated in Figure 1. These three overarching themes were seen consistently across the data sources in most of the participant responses. Subsequently, we propose this framework of worthwhile practices based upon these three core themes, with a number of sub-topics identified in each.

In the following section of this report, results are shared by data collection source, beginning with the findings from the survey data and followed by the interview data. Each data source section commences with a short description of the participant population for that section. In our presentation of the interview data findings, the three overarching themes of the framework of worthwhile practices are discussed and are broken down into a series of sub-topics as highlighted in Figure 1.
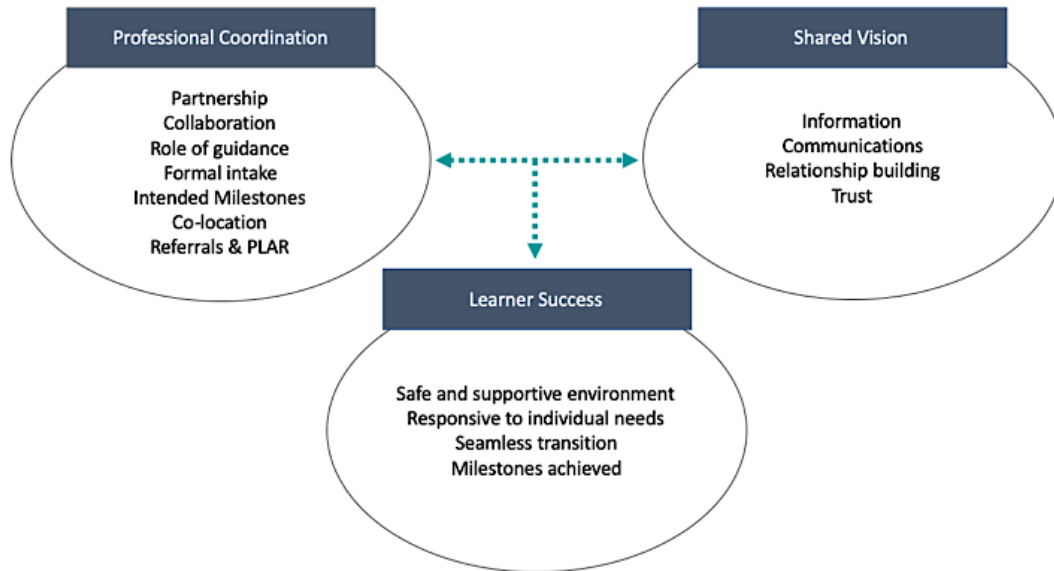
Figure 1. LBS to Credit Relationships: A Framework of Worthwhile Practices

LBS and Credit Programs Survey Findings

An online survey about the working relationship between LBS and credit programs was developed in consultation with CESBA's LBS Committee. Given that this survey is one of the first attempts at obtaining systematically collected information about the working relationship between LBS and credit programs, most survey questions were open-ended. Open responses were coded using thematic qualitative analysis. Where qualitative themes are identified, a count of the number of similar thematic responses is also provided. For example, when the theme "co-location of programs (8)" is reported, the number eight (8) indicates that this response was communicated by eight participants.

CESBA distributed the online survey to its member boards via email. LBS and Adult & Continuing Education staff were invited to participate in survey completion. A total of 35 participants who work in school boards with LBS programs took part in the

survey. The breakdown of survey completion by professional role was as follows: 19 LBS Managers or Coordinators (54%), 8 Adult and Continuing Education Staff/Practitioners (23%), 7 Adult and Continuing Education Administrators (20%), and 1 Adult and Continuing Education Guidance Counsellor (3%; See Table 3).

Table 3. Survey Participation by Professional Role

Professional Role	Number	Percentage of Survey Sample
LBS Manager or Coordinator	19	54%
A&CE Staff/Practitioner	8	23%
A&CE Administrator	7	20%
Guidance Counsellor	1	3%
TOTAL	35	100%

Thirty-four out of the 35 participants (97%) indicated that a working relationship existed between their LBS and credit programs. The length of the working relationship ranged from 1 year to 35 years, with the average length relationship being 17 years.

Nature of the Working Relationship Between LBS and Credit Programs

When asked to describe the nature of the working relationship between LBS and credit programs, participants communicated several interesting practices. The most frequently reported responses were the following:

- A formal intake process in which guidance counsellors/staff made referrals to LBS to work on skills necessary for credit, including PLAR preparation (14)

- Professional coordination (e.g., LBS instructors reach out to credit teachers to see what skills need to be developed; LBS refers learners to credit when they are ready; credit teachers can refer learners to LBS; LBS and guidance work closely

together, monthly managerial meetings, credit teachers visit LBS sites to develop relationships, LBS supports correspondence program; 10)

- Co-location of programs (8)

- LBS provides active support for the transition into credit (e.g., learners can be enrolled in both programs simultaneously, learners can be enrolled in LBS when they first start credit programs; 5)

- Shared services (e.g., shared programming, shared outreach, shared intake and guidance, shared database; 4)

When asked how the working relationship was established between LBS and credit programs, survey respondents identified the following factors:

- Through past or present leadership (10)

- Co-location (7)

- In response to policies aimed at improving learner outcomes (4)

- Developed organically through a small team (3)

- Heard about similar partnerships through CESBA (2)

- To improve coordination of services (3)

When participants were asked why the relationship between LBS and credit programs was established, the most frequently reported response was to improve success rates through needed (LBS) support (15). Other explanations included: LBS helps meet individual needs that credit programs cannot (8), it provides a seamless transition from one program to the other (4), to boost numbers/reach new clients (4), working together helps both programs (1), to increase available funding to better meet learner needs (1), and it just makes sense (1).

Participants were asked about how the working relationship between LBS and credit programs had changed over time. These changes were reported in relation to the depth of the relationship, the need for the relationship, and the working processes (see Table 3). There is a deeper relationship between LSB and credit programs when administration and guidance understand the importance of LBS in supporting learners for credit (4) and when staff have a greater understanding of each other's programs (3). Owing to a policy change, LBS is now able to support learners as they transition into credit (2) and LBS does a great job of preparing learners for success in credit pathways (3). There is greater alignment between programs because of policy changes and the programs are developing more streamlined processes (e.g., referral, assessment, curriculum).

Table 4. How the Nature of the Working Relationship Between LBS and Credit Has Changed

Changes in Depth (13)	Changes in Need (6)	Changes in Processes (6)
- Dependent on administration/guidance and their understanding of the importance of LBS (4) - As understanding of each other's programs grow, this increases the likelihood of referrals to meet learner needs (3) - Team meetings and information sharing lead to deeper relationships (2) - Positive working culture that people return to - More transparent relationship	- Policy change - LBS is now allowed to support the transition into credit programs (2) - Credit program used to have their own prep courses, but they no longer do; LBS does a good job of filling the gap - LBS is a complementary program that supports the PLAR process - LBS bridges ESL and credit pathways - Greater understanding of how a mixture of programs better meets the needs of learners	- Streamlines referral and assessment processes to support student success - Adapted curriculum to better meet learner needs - More aligned intake - LBS is gaining credibility with more educated and experienced staff - New programs are available for people who graduate from LBS - Greater alignment in programs because of policy changes

- Stronger over time
- Co-location promotes relationship building and shared understanding

Learners benefit from the working relationship between LBS and credit in multiple ways. The most frequently reported learner benefits were as follows:

- Learners gain confidence and skills to be successful in credit; it's a more seamless system (16)

- Continuous support in LBS helps with transitioning into credit (10)

- LBS provides needed support not readily available in A&CE – no special education or advocates (8)

- Co-location (and personal relationships) assists with the transition from one program to another (7); co-location also helps reduce stigma of LBS (2)

- Learners in credit who are struggling can receive LBS support (6)

- Support in understanding and completing PLAR (5)

- Adults benefit from support so being involved in both programs brings the benefit of caring professionals from both (4)

- LBS provides a safe place for learners (e.g., LBS is a "safety net", there is a warm "handoff" with LBS instructor accompanying the learner to the first credit meeting, LBS is safe starting point, learners feel safe; 4)

- LBS is a more flexible and student-centered program that helps learners transition more successfully into credit (3)

LBS Programs

Flexibility is very important in LBS programs because they serve diverse learners with complex needs. One respondent described the importance of flexibility this way, "There needs to be an understanding that we are not the same as a traditional school. It is the rigidity of traditional schooling that contributed to this particular population's lack of success." Essentially, participants reported that flexibility was needed to meet learner needs and be responsive to societal changes. Participants communicated that flexibility was needed to:

- Meet adult learner needs and preferences (e.g., online, in person learning; 7)

- Meet individual needs (7)

- Meet diverse learner needs (5) - LBS learners have the most varied and complex needs – flexibility is required for access and timelines; Flexibility is needed to help meet diverse learner needs – wholistic support needed to help learners achieve their goals;

- Respond to economic changes that require adults to work (3)

- Respond to community needs (2)

- Provide appropriate support (2) - multiple layers of support and allow LBS to support learners in their transition to credit

- Operate the program (1)

Participants reported that physical locations were important for LBS learners. They communicated about how physical locations can set learners up for success, should be convenient for adult learners, and that co-location promotes the transition of LBS learners into credit programs (see Table 5).

Table 5. Importance of Physical Locations in LBS

Set Learners Up for Success (15)	Convenient Locations Needed for Adult Learners (8)	Co-Location Promotes Transition to Credit (4)
"Environments that are well-cared for with access to technology, equipment, food, and community are key components to learner success and retention at our program." - Low level learners need high levels of support available at physical locations - Fewer distractions than at home - Accountability and support of an instructor - Generally, have better results with face-to-face learning - Allow learners to learn from instructor and each other - Learning hubs increase engagement and retention - A lounge area for learners in important so they can have conversations with each other (community)	"Students are more likely to come to school if they travel a short distance." - LBS should be accessible via public transportation - LBS should be located in the community - Shorter distance of travel - Convenience is important because of complex lives	"Having a credit program in the same building as LBS is most beneficial for obvious reasons. It is a "light at the end of the tunnel"…it makes the transition that much easier and less complicated." - Supports vibrant partnerships - Helps learners feel like they are part of the credit system - Helps learners visualize their goals

According to participants, adult learners found out about their LBS program through the following approaches:

- Referrals by community partners (22)

- Word of Mouth (17)

- Community Outreach/Advertising (17)

- School Board Inquiries (11)

- School website (7)

- Online Search/Research (2)

Transitioning from LBS into Credit Programs

Several practices were used to help LBS learners transition into credit programs.

Survey respondents identified the following practices:

- Skills upgrading targeting success in credit (9)

- PLAR support (5)

- Learners attend LBS and credit simultaneously at first to promote success (5)

- Introduced to credit teachers/staff (5)

- Recommendation/referral to credit when ready (4)

- Transition process support (4)

- Technology support (e.g., given computers, learning management system (LMS) training, online learning orientation; 3)

- Guidance support (3)

- Pre-PSW program (1)

- Wrap around supports (1)

- Assessment of strengths and weaknesses to help prepare for credit (1)

- Confidence building (1)

- LBS Liaison (1)

- Professional conversations between LBS and credit staff (1)

    Participants were asked if guidance counsellors in their Board had a role in

helping adult learners in LBS transition into credit programs. Twenty-two out of 28 participants (79%) indicated "Yes" – guidance counsellors help with the transition into credit programs. When asked how guidance counsellors (and other staff) help adult learners in LBS transition into credit, participants indicated that in some school boards adult learners enrolled in LBS had access to guidance counsellors and pathway planning right away (7), while other adult learners were only referred to guidance counsellors upon completion of Jr. PLAR (1) or the LBS program (3). In two school boards, guidance counsellors/speakers visited LBS classes to provide information about credit programs and PLAR. Another important role guidance counsellors played in helping LBS learners transition into credit was to advise about the selection of a first senior credit that would ensure success on the part of the learner (2). Lastly, guidance counsellors were useful in making referrals to support adult learner success (2). One participant summarized the positive working relationship between LBS and guidance in their school board: "Guidance is aware of the value of LBS and the value it can add to a learning portfolio".

When asked how adult learners benefit from guidance counsellors (and other staff) in transitioning from LBS to credit programs, participants reported the following:

- Access to pathway planning - knowing what they need to graduate and various options for credit completion (e.g., dual credit, PLAR, etc.; 11)
- Seamless transition from non-credit to credit programs (e.g., knowing staff in both programs; staff that are all on the same team; best of both worlds and every opportunity to succeed, guidance is a bridge between LBS and credit; 4)
- Guidance counsellors provide support for individual need and personal issues (3)

- Learners have access to another caring adult (2)

- It reduces the stigma of LBS (1)

- It facilitates information sharing about students (1)

The vital role of guidance counsellors for adult learners enrolled in LBS was communicated by a participant this way: "The role of our guidance is crucial for LBS learners. They need to know they have a pathway programmer supporting their education goals".

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is the formal evaluation and credit-granting process whereby adult learners may obtain credits for prior learning. Prior learning includes the knowledge and skills that adult learners have acquired, in both formal and informal ways. Participants were asked if adult learners enrolled in LBS were made aware of PLAR. Twenty-five out of 28 (89%) of respondents indicated "Yes" – adult learners enrolled in LBS are made aware of PLAR. School boards used the following methods for making adult learners aware of PLAR:

- Guidance counsellors make LBS learners aware of PLAR (8)

- There are PLAR discussions at initial LBS intake (5)

- Direct conversations and PLAR preparation is incorporated into LBS (5)

- PLAR is presented in LBS classes (3)

- LBS instructor suggests learners make a guidance appointment when they are ready for PLAR (2)

- Learners with a credit pathway learn about PLAR at enrollment

- Adult learners complete a PLAR outline in advance that are held on file until ready for credit intake

- Adult learners are made aware of PLAR when they are strong enough to complete it

It is interesting to note that in some school boards, adult learners were made aware about PLAR both through guidance counsellors and classroom visits. PLAR is a useful tool for helping adult learners transition into credit programs. Participants reported the following benefits of PLAR for adult learners enrolled in LBS:

- It fast tracks credit earning so the goal of credit achievement is closer than originally thought (13)
- LBS equips adult learners with skills in preparation for PLAR (6)
- PLAR opens up options and pathway planning (3)
- Adult learners can complete PLAR at their own pace with individualized LBS support (3)
- Shorter path to graduation alleviates anxiety (2)
- PLAR builds confidence
- Removes a barrier and acknowledges past life and learning experiences

According to one participant, the value of PLAR is that it "allows adult learners to see the light at the end of the tunnel."

A more recent area of provision in Adult & Continuing Education programming in Ontario is Personal Support Worker (PSW) certification. Survey respondents were asked whether their A&CE programs offered PSW training. Fifteen out of 29 respondents (52%) indicated "Yes" – their school board offers PSW training. Out of the 15 participants who indicated that there school board offers PSW certification, 67% reported that there was a working relationship between LBS and PSW programs. When

asked about the nature of the working relationship between LBS and PSW programs, participants reported the following:

- A strong relationship between non-credit and credit already existed (3)

- Staff worked closely to identify gaps for adult learners; as a result, LBS prepares adult learners for success in PSW programs (e.g., medical terminology and anatomy, PSW essentials; PSW Prep; 3)

- There are cross referrals between LBS and PSW (2)

- Learners are treated on a case by case basis

- Guidance counsellors help support the relationship between LBS and PSW programs

Nine participants indicated that their school boards offered preparation for the PSW program. PSW program preparation consisted of the following:

- Pre-PSW program (4)

- LBS programming to prepare for the PSW program (2)

- If adult learners do not pass the PSW entrance test/literacy test, they are referred to LBS for support (2)

- Individual upgrading based on assessment

    In addition to helping LBS learners transition into credit programs, support is provided for LBS learners when they begin their credit program. Participants identified the following supports:

- Access to LBS for additional support while in credit – open door policy (8)

- Begin credit while still being supported by/enrolled in LBS (7)

- Learning strategies support from LBS (4)

- PLAR support (2)

- Special education support for people with an IEP

- Convenience of co-location for appointments

- Professional coordination between LBS and credit teachers to ensure LBS
  learners are equipped with needed skills

- Assistance with credit registration process

Despite the support provided for LBS learners to transition into credit, they inevitably experience transition challenges. Survey respondents identified the following challenges:

- Attendance (5)

- Technology issues (3)

- Lack of life stabilization (3)

- Lack of self-confidence/self-awareness (3)

- LBS culminating tasks are onerous (2)

- Not wanting to leave the LBS program (2)

- Dropping out of the LBS program

- Anxiety about change

- Need for support when learners first start credit

- Lack of physical locations and in-person support in more rural areas

- Amount of paperwork required for LBS; need for coordination among programs

- Maintaining motivation when the process takes longer than anticipated

- Unprepared for credit

- Lack of support network

- Mental health issues

- Learning disabilities

- Lack of credit supports for adult learners

- Lack of structure with online learning

- Limited availability of LBS (part-time in one school board)

Participants also reported about how they attempted to mitigate transition challenges. The following mitigating practices were identified:

- Referrals to other agencies (4)

- Start to prepare learners for the transition to credit by talking about it and planning for it (3)

- Learners can stay in LBS longer before they fully transition into credit (3)

- Flexibility in programming (3)

- Collaboration between LBS and credit staff (2)

- Introducing learners to credit teachers (2)

- Checking in/staying connected with the learner during the transition to offer support as needed (2)

- Small school and familiarity with LBS helps reduce anxiety

- Developing trust and a community of learners

- Ongoing monitoring of student achievement and pathway plan

- Shared documentation among programs

- Working one-on-one with learners to complete milestones

- Discuss the importance of culminating tasks with learners

Summary of Survey Findings

LBS is a unique program that equips adults with essential skills needed for success in life, employment, and secondary school credit programs. In some school boards, there is a working relationship between LBS and credit programs. The most frequently reported reason for this relationship is a shared goal for adult learner success. Essentially, LBS meets the needs of individual learners and equips them for success in a way that credit programs currently do not have the capacity for. The nature of the working relationship between LBS and credit programs is often characterized by a formal intake process in which learners are assessed and referred to LBS to upgrade skills needed for success in credit programs, professional coordination of LBS and credit program staff to support student success (e.g., LBS instructors consult with credit teachers to see what skills they should focus on; LBS and guidance work closely together on pathway planning, etc.), and co-location of programs.

The most frequently reported ways that LBS supports learners in transitioning to credit are through skills upgrading, PLAR support, learners maintaining the support of LBS during their initial transition into credit programs, and introductions/orientation to credit program staff. In addition, guidance counsellors play a vital role in helping adult learners transition from LBS to credit through pathway planning, support of learning goals, and through advice about individual life issues. When adult learners are in enrolled in credit, LBS supports learners through an open-door policy where staff and instructors are available for additional support, learners can be enrolled in credit and LBS simultaneously, LBS can provide learning strategies support, and LBS can help with PLAR. Adult learners benefit from a working relationship between LBS and credit

programs in the following ways:

- They gain confidence and skills needed to be successful in credit programs (making it a more seamless system)

- They have continuous support from LBS (not readily available in A&CE programs) as they transition into credit, co-location of programs assists in a smooth transition from one program to the next (and also reduces the stigma of LBS)

- They receive support in understanding and completing PLAR

Policy changes have strengthened the working relationship between LBS and credit programs by allowing LBS to support adult learners more fully in their transition to credit programs. These policy changes can help promote more streamlined processes (e.g., assessment, curriculum, etc.). Co-location of LBS and credit programs increase the likelihood of positive working relationships, especially when marked by information sharing, relationship building, and professional coordination to promote student success. When A&CE administrators and guidance counsellors understand the value of LBS in supporting adult learner success, there is naturally a stronger working relationship between LBS and credit programs.

LBS and Credit Programs Interview Findings

The interview protocol focussed on two main strands: (1) gathering insights in relation to the nature of school board LBS program relationships with credit programs, and (2) highlighting worthwhile practices for supporting adult learners enrolled in LBS to transition into credit programs. Analysis of the interview data collected showed that the

nature of the relationships between LBS and credit programs was driven by having a shared vision, professional coordination, and a commitment to learner success.

A Shared Vision

A shared vision is a clear and collective view of a desired state that a range of people within an organization identify with and agree upon (Hoe, 2007). A shared vision can help create and build a sense of community, and provide a sense of purpose and direction. Within learning communities and organizations, a clearly articulated shared vision can indicate the why, what, and how of strategic directions and planning (Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium, n.d.). A shared vision should look to the future and reflect the voices and goals of the community, encouraging collaborative practices and shared understandings. Data analysed for this project (as shown in figure 1) revealed that shared vision comprised of five sub-topics, which we outline as; information, communications, relationship building, trust, and learner centred. A range of sample participant quotations to support these sub-topics are included in appendix A and an overview of each are shared in the following section of this report.

Information

All 13 interview participants agreed on the importance of sharing information, with consensus on its importance for supporting a relationship between LBS and credit programming. Advantages of shared vision include that when all staff and educators are sharing information, coordination is improved, and all members of A&CE are prepared to provide a range of information to their learners that support pathways between LBS and credit programming. One board reported how this has become easier though their pilot of Edge4, a database with capabilities of tracking a learner whether they come into

A&CE through LBS, ESL, or credit routes. However, even though all participants could see the advantages of information sharing, there were some challenges, for example, the constraints of being in a staff role undertaking intake processes with learners resulted in not being able to advise on different pathways as this fell under the guidance counsellor role. In addition, sharing information beyond the immediate LBS team was sometimes problematic, as credit teachers were located at different sites.

Communications

Engaging and interacting with others is seen as being a critical part of healthy living (Thomas & McDonagh, 2013), and it was certainly an activity practised and advocated for by all of the participants interviewed for this study. Effective and clear communication was seen as essential to support information sharing, and to ensure that learners were fully aware of any different pathways available to them, and how they might navigate and be successful along those pathways. Three participants described how effective communication was aided by co-location of LBS and credit programming in the same building, however two participants also acknowledged that database systems complicated ways of communication, with duplication happening and various staff only having access to specific data. One participant described the importance of onboarding new staff and instructors to help them understand the many nuances of working in the LBS program (interview 3). In addition, communication was also seen as an intentional way to promote the LBS program's worth to other parties such as community partners and non A&CE colleagues across the board (Interviews 4, 5, & 9).

It should be noted that there is a stigma attached to the LBS program, with contributing factors being the stigma attached to not possessing foundational skills that

most adults take for granted, and the name of the program including the word *basic*

skills. Some participant school boards had recognized this and refer to their LBS

programs with different program names, such as *literacy and essential skills* (interview

9) or *academic upgrading* (interviews 5, 6, 8). Other names used across different

boards include *Gateway*, *Core Essentials (CorE)*, *Adult Learning and Skills*

Development, *Essential Skills Training*, *Training and Learning Centre (TLC)*, and *Adult*

Literacy and Basic Skills.

Relationship Building

All interview participants spoke to the need to build relationships with colleagues to

facilitate a relationship between the LBS and credit programs. This was seen as an

ongoing endeavor, and one that ultimately benefitted the learners, as most instructors

and teachers developed supportive relationships with their learners. What these

relationships allowed for is the provision of individualized supports that various learners

need. This can only be achieved through a process of getting to know the learner and

their individual circumstances.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) spoke to the importance of relationships using the

concept of social capital. They conceptualized social capital as "how the quantity and

quality of interactions and social relationships among people affects their access to

knowledge and information; their senses of expectation, obligation, and trust; and how

far they are likely to adhere to the same norms or codes of behavior" (Hargreaves &

Fullan, 2012, p. 90). Such a construct is important in building the relationship between

LBS and credit programming, where the relationship building provides a mechanism for

information sharing, and effective communication becomes easier over time with

familiarity. The challenge is when a member of the team leaves, or when someone new starts. One participant described how important it was to keep that continuity, and the value of more experienced staff to act as conduits in building the new relationships.

Trust

Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1989) described trust as "a teacher's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (p. 189). Subsequently, trust is a quality developed through interpersonal dynamics (Hong et al., 2020) and fluctuates as relationships change over time in various contexts (Lee et al., 2011).

Seven participants shared how trust was an integral part of relationship building, and how trusting relationships built between LBS and credit program staff and educators rippled down to also building the necessary trust with learners. On participant described the iterative process navigated by guidance counsellors, teachers, and staff that would embark if they knew a learner was struggling or experiencing challenges, and how this was essential when credit colleagues referred learners to LBS, that LBS folks would in turn return learners back to credit programs once they were ready. Trust was also a key component in building effective relationships with LBS learners, many who have needed significant courage to return to a learning environment.

Learner Centred

"There is no more trusting relationship than the one between an LBS instructor and their learner" (Interview 3)

Being learner centred was intrinsically tied to the forming of trusting relationships, with all participants asserting the importance of being learner centred in all areas of their

working practice. When individuals are making decisions about referring learners from LBS to credit or vice versa, their colleagues must trust that such decisions are made because of the best interests of the learner. Participants described how their focus was not on helping one program or another, but was aimed at ensuring their learners were placed in the best program to be successful in their learning (all interviews).

Professional Coordination

Coordination is an important function in any organization and has been described as the process of integration and management of interdependence (Beardwell & Holden, 2004). Coordination requires that activities and functions be synchronised in order to meet planned objectives. The data analysed for this study suggests that need for professional coordination to support the relationship between LBS and credit programs is related to the formal or informal structure of any partnerships between LBS and credit, the level of collaboration, role of guidance, formal intake processes, intended milestones, co-location, referrals, and PLAR. Sample quotes from all of these sub-topics are included in appendix B.

Partnership (Formal/Informal)

Almost all of the interview participants described an iterative mix of formal and informal relationships between LBS and credit programs, reflecting the individualised approaches to the partnerships that are seen across different school boards. Some elements were formal by design and purpose, for example most administrative tasks (e.g., form filling and associated paperwork) follow a necessary formal process. For some boards, current or past principals have worked to formalize the relationship between LBS and credit, with this more likely to have taken place when programs are co-located in the same premises. However, amongst the formal structures, most boards reported how the relationships between staff, instructors, teachers, and guidance

counsellors are more informal across both LBS and credit programs. Many had developed partnerships that were described as "relaxed" (Interview 7), and "informal and they flow" (Interview 1).

Collaboration

The sub-topic of collaboration reflects the ways that staff, instructors, teachers, and guidance counsellors supported each other on a day-to-day basis. This most often manifested as a set of informal behaviours recognizing the need to cooperate with each other, seeing and accepting the benefits of sharing information, being committed to not operating in a silo, learning about other programs and understanding the importance of that learning in how it manifests into enhanced experiences for the learner. All twelve interview participants reported that collaboration was by necessity an intentional act.

Role of Guidance

All participants shared that guidance plays a crucial role in supporting any relationship between LBS and credit programming. The nuances of the guidance role across different boards means that this role is varied, and necessarily so to reflect what LBS and credit partnerships look like in each board. For example, in some boards meeting with the guidance counsellor commences during the intake process for all learners in that board (interviews 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, and 11), whereas some boards have a more fluid approach with guidance available for learners on an as-and-when-needed basis (interviews 1, 5, 6, 8 and 9).

For two boards, the duties of the guidance counsellor were specific to that role, and other staff could not replicate those, so where a staff member might have knowledge and information to help a learner transition from LBS to credit (e.g.,

knowledge about different pathways) they could not share this information with the learner as this stepped into the responsibilities of the guidance counsellor. This was a source of frustration for these staff. For other boards, the role of guidance was more fluid, and was undertaken by a range of staff who were able to provide guidance at intake, for referrals, next steps planning, and to support learners through the PLAR process and pathway planning for credit programs.

Essentially, the role of guidance seems amplified where *career* is understood in terms of being about our journey through life, learning, and work. For anyone working in a guidance role in A&CE, be this a formal or informal role, aligning to this way of viewing career speaks to the range of advice and guidance necessary to support the diverse needs of adult learners who come to LBS. The role of guidance described by many of the participants confirms the necessity of viewing career in these terms, where careers facilitate economic independence, and equip learners to enact their values and make positive contributions to their communities and broader society.

Formal Intake Processes

Three participants described the importance of having a formal intake process to support learners as they entered LBS and how during the formal intake process plans for eventual transitions to credit programs could be discussed. There was evidence from all participants that intake processes had either evolved or had been adapted across time to meet changes in policy, practice, and learner needs. In addition, the moments when the intake takes place, regardless of whether this is during one or more meetings, provided an opportunity for professional coordination to occur through the sharing of information.

Intended Milestones

Five of the interviewees described the importance of identifying for, agreeing with, and advocating on behalf of clear intended milestones for learners as a crucial part of the LBS program. For one study participant (Interview 5), there was a constant discussion with their learners about individual milestones, and how these related to the LBS program and their learning beyond the program. For the learner, such a process can be filled with questions and doubts as to whether such milestones can be achieved. The participant described the importance of professional coordination where all of the appropriate support mechanisms and pathways to other programs can be shared with the individual learner.

Co-Location

Within A&CE, co-location occurs when two or more programs share the same premises (building or rooms) and associated equipment. Six of the interview participants spoke to the importance of their LBS being co-located with credit programs in the same room or building, revealing how much easier it was to provide the wrap-around care needed by their learners and make appropriate referrals where needed. One participant (Interview 3) also described how being in the same building made it possible to coordinate with the personal support worker (PSW) program in their board through providing business suite software training for PSW learners who were then able to be referred across to LBS where needed.

Referrals and PLAR

All interview participants pointed to the importance of referrals and how LBS was stringent throughout the referral process and protocols. Many learners come into LBS

programs through being referred for academic upgrading prior to moving on to credit programs, or sometimes to support their learning in credit programs. One participant (Interview 4) was keen to emphasize that LBS should not be seen as the "little sister of credit" as there is a huge need for LBS for many learners regardless of whether they are moving on to take credit programs. Importantly, referral processes provide an opportunity for professional coordination rooted in meeting learner needs. One reported advantage of being in a co-located space was also how PLAR could easily be made available to LBS learners (Interview 1).

Learner Success

Learner success is usually understood in terms of academic progress and achievement. In this context, success is measured in terms of academic milestones such as completing a course, or advancing to the next level. However, research has consistently shown that for learners in A&CE, learner success constitutes so much more than just a measurement of academic achievement (e.g., Hughes et al., 2017; Godden et al., 2018; Northwest Territories Literacy Council, 2013; WEA, 2017), and includes many positive personal and social non-academic outcomes such as improved self-confidence and an increased ability to set and achieve goals. Such personal and social skills are important indicators of healthy and productive economies and societies, and they are nurtured through the specific learning environments that are cultivated in A&CE (Youmans & Godden, 2017). Through the LBS and credit partnerships, a shared commitment to supporting all types of learner success manifested through creating a safe and supportive environment, being responsive to individual needs, providing seamless

transitions for learners, and celebrating milestones achieved. Example quotes from the learner success theme are included in appendix D.

Safe and Supportive Environment

The sub-topic of a safe and supportive environment was seen as making a fundamental contribution to learner success in eight of the interviews conducted. Interview participants shared how their LBS learners had sometimes not previously experienced success in an educational system, and they were vulnerable. Successful strategies undertaken by LBS instructors included showing their own vulnerability to their learners, for example by sharing some personal stories about their lives outside of teaching, and offering lots of help and support in the classroom (interview 6). Open and transparent communication with learners was important and intentional (interview 5), as was providing transparent and accurate information.

Responsive to Individual Needs

Being responsive to individual needs was strongly tied to providing a safe and supportive environment (interview 1). All interview participants strongly emphasized how LBS programs are completely learner centred, with goals and outcomes set with full consultation and agreement of the learners. Once again, open communication between teachers, instructors, guidance and learners helps ensure that learners are comfortable with progress and next steps (interview 7 & 13). All interview participants shared a common understanding of why such responsiveness was fundamentally linked to learner success, highlighting the impact of the numerous life challenges that impacted so many learners' abilities to remain on track with their studies.

Seamless Transition

Four of the interview participants described how they worked to provide a seamless transition between LBS and credit programs for learners who intended to transition to credit programs. In one board, this process had become easier now that learners were able to take a numeracy upgrading alongside and English credit class. This was accredited to an evolution between the different government ministries that meant these options were now available for learners (interview 5). However, the counter to this was when a learner is "misplaced" in credit and is struggling and needs to make their way to LBS to gain readiness to undertake credit programming (interview 8).

Milestones Achieved

For all of the interview participants, describing how they marked the milestones achieved by their learners, through celebrating all aspects of their learners' successes, this was their most animated and passionate discussion piece throughout the interviews. Many participants shared how they marked learner success by celebrating all milestones achieved, with celebrations ranging from small in-class acknowledgements to graduation ceremonies. One participant spoke of the power of classrooms becoming their own small communities, with learners acting as cheerleaders for each other (interview 6). Emphasis was placed on the importance of never minimizing success, as success is different for everyone (interview 9).

Summary of Interview Findings

As we have previously asserted, LBS is a unique program that equips adults with the fundamental skills they need to experience success in learning, work, and life. Some of the interview participants shared how the partnerships they had in their boards between

LBS and credit programming acted as a strong mechanism to ensure adult learners were well supported to achieve their skills and academic learning goals and aspirations. This was overwhelmingly attributed to the partnerships between LBS and credit programs having a shared vision and professional coordination. For the shared vision to be constructed, there had to be buy-in, and a commitment to the sharing of information, regular, open, and transparent communication, and a sustained effort towards relationship building.

All of these facets of a shared vision were dependent on professional coordination, and we saw evidence of an iterative dependency between shared vision and professional coordination with each construct underpinning the other's existence. When a shared vision and professional coordination occurred, they were strongly rooted by a shared commitment to learner success.

Summary

In this study, we set out to determine the number of school board LBS programs offered in the province of Ontario, and investigate the nature of the referral processes within their non-credit and credit programs. Furthermore, we examined how adult learners enrolled in LBS programs are supported in credit programs or assisted to transition into credit programs. The overarching purpose for this investigative focus was to highlight worthwhile practices for supporting adult learners to transition from LBS (non-credit) programs to credit program pathways.

We discovered that there are 16 Learning Networks of Ontario related to literacy services. These learning networks were contacted to determine how many school boards in their respective regions offer LBS. In total, it was determined that 34 district

school boards in Ontario offer LBS programs. However, this took some effort to establish. We hope that this list of LBS provision in school boards will be useful for strengthening existing partnerships and establishing new ones.

We found a substantial body of evidence that speaks to the nuanced nature of referral processes within both LBS and credit programs, with many boards describing the iterative nature of how they refer their LBS learners across to credit programs and their credit learners across to LBS programs as per the individual needs of the learner. A great deal of time and attention is provided to learners to support such transitions, and as such, professional coordination is helpful to ensure this process is as smooth as possible for the learner. All of the participants in this study agreed that intentional and purposeful relationships between LBS and credit programs help ensure that individual learner needs remain at the heart of A&CE programming.

Many worthwhile practices that support learner transition from LBS to credit programs were revealed through this study, and we highlight these through the two overarching themes of professional coordination and creating a shared vision. Of particular importance within professional coordination was forming partnerships, collaboration, the role of guidance, having formal intake processes, sharing explicit intended milestones for learners, LBS programs being co-located with credit programs, and the referrals and PLAR processes. Within shared vision, the willing exchange of information, paying attention to communications, intentional and purposeful relationship building, and the role of trust were important. The data collected validated that through these two overarching themes of professional coordination and a shared vision, learner success is an achievable outcome.

LBS and Credit Program Partnership Recommendations

According to the data we collected, there are two key factors in positive working relationships between LBS and credit programs that help promote adult learner success: 1) shared vision, and 2) professional coordination. With this in mind, we provide recommendations for improving these two aspects of partnership (see Table 6 and 7). It is our hope that as these partnership components are strengthened, adult learners will increasingly thrive across both LBS and credit programs.

Table 6. Recommendations for Improving Shared Vision in LBS and Credit Program Partnerships

Shared Vision Recommendations	Data Source
Leadership plays a large role in establishing and strengthening the LBS and credit partnership – choose leaders who have knowledge about the value of LBS and credit programs or who value partnerships	Survey Interviews
Some boards have team meetings, while others do not; be intentional about establishing team meetings and develop a shared vision for adult learners as a team – it's easier to accomplish goals when you have something to aim for	Survey Interviews
LBS and credit are complementary programs – help staff to see the reciprocal nature of these programs and how they benefit both programs and ALL learners	Survey Interviews
LBS programs do have stigma attached to them. To address this some boards refer to LBS by another name. Such variance in name is potentially confusing and consideration should be given to updating LBS as a program name consistently across the province	Interviews
Learner success should drive decisions made about how LBS and credit work together – how can we better support adult learners together?	Survey Interviews

Consider collecting data to document progress towards shared goals

Try innovative joint pilot projects to better meet the needs of adult learners

Table 7. Recommendations for Improving Professional Coordination in LBS and Credit Program Partnerships

Professional Coordination Recommendations	Data Source
From a strategic perspective, it would be useful to clearly identify all school boards across the province that are offering the LBS program	
Staff must understand each other's programs to see their value and increase the likelihood of referrals	Survey Interviews
Benefits to co-location of LBS and credit programs include efficient communication, relationship building, and efficient coordination; where co-location doesn't exist, staff must be more intentional about coordination, possibly through the use of technology or regularly scheduled meetings	Survey Interviews
Some LBS learners have access to guidance counsellors once they are enrolled, while others do not. Guidance counsellors play a vital role in helping LBS learners transition into credit programs; All LBS learners should have access to trained guidance counsellors that support pathway planning, achievement of learning goals, and help with individual life issues, where career is understood in terms of being about life, learning, and work.	Survey Interviews
PLAR is an important tool for helping adult learners in LBS transition to credit programs. PLAR preparation equips adult learners with skills needed to be successful in credit programs and completion of PLAR helps adult learners earn credits in a timely manner. LBS programs should actively support preparation for	Survey Interviews

and completion of PLAR.

More streamlined processes should be developed to better meet the needs of both programs (e.g., intake, assessment, curriculum, data collection, PLAR)	Survey Interviews
Flexible programming should be available in LBS and credit programs to meet the needs of adult learners, including the coordination of these services	Survey Interviews
LBS and credit programs benefit from shared services – professional development, outreach, guidance counsellors, etc.	Survey Interviews

Concluding Thoughts

The authors of this study fully recognize Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) as both a valuable stand-alone program *and* as a wonderful complementary program that prepares adult learners for success in credit programs. The data collected for this study subsequently supports our recommendation that school boards with LBS programs should look for ways to strengthen their partnerships and school boards without LBS should explore the possibility of establishing this type of partnership. We conclude this study with a note of deep appreciation to all of the participants who shared their time and expertise with us so openly and generously.

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Appendix A: Shared Vision

Sub-Topic	How many interviews	Sample Quotes Positives	Sample Quotes Challenges
Information	All	"It's very important that they understand what's in the credit program, so I encourage the students to talk our teachers in LBS to talk with the students and credit to find out what commonly, you know, people will need to know" (Interview 1) "...the one thing that we have done that really works, and i'd like to see it continue is we've got ESL LBS credit information sessions. So all of us heads go into the classrooms. Or if it's an online program, we have an online presentation about how English is second language, literacy and basic skills and credit programs can help students. And we present to Canada language benchmark, high and 5 and higher students I've been doing this for a couple of years, and I keep finding that LBS is such an unknown factor. The more information sessions we do about it, the better the better we can do. I would say any strategies that I can do to get the word out about literacy and basic skills to cross cultural Learner center to all of our partners in you know, in the community to Ontario Works is...just keep on finding strategies, for that" (Interview 1) "But we constantly do the education piece with the people in credit. So you know we will often do a presentation just to the guidance counselors and some of their guidance counselors are retired teachers, so they only come for the assessment piece" (Interview 3) "The information sharing even really comes out of CESBA like we'll go to CESBA. We all learn things in our own little groups, and then we'll end up debriefing afterwards. But that's a big part of it. We're [sharing] our	"I'm not a guidance counselor, but they see me first, and then they're like, They ask me all kinds of guidance counsel questions. So I, even though I know a lot about it now, just from experience, I can't pretend to lead them in any certain direction. So I have to stick to my role. So that would be a challenges" (Interview 2) "I'll tell you one of the issues that some other locations have had is that there's no space at those other locations. Sometimes they're unfamiliar with what we do, although we try to educate them. But until they see success with their within their own numbers, their funding is based on numbers" (Interview 3)

		information. Sharing happens" (Interview 4) "So what makes it easier for us? I think it's the staff, offering them opportunities for becoming informed, professional development, giving them the opportunity to ask the questions...it's empowering them with the opportunity to explore, and that is imparted on their learners that are in front of them" (Interview 5) "...if you're if you understand about the courses and the marking and everything you can...I don't, know, coordinate more easily with the guidance counselor" (Interview 2) "You need to know pathways. You need to know information about other programs. You need to know all those pieces in order for them to be able to say to students like, oh, you know, this might be of interest to you. And did you know you can do this? So did you know that this is available for you?" (Interview 6) "edge 4 is basically a database that has capabilities to have data tracking for. If a learner comes through ESL, LBS, or credit, we all put the information in. So now, especially, LBS and credit are able to talk to each other...There's a lot better communication now, using that database between the systems, and ESL is going to be coming on board" (Interview 8)	
Communications	All	"...our challenges come from just communicating, you know, communicating..." (Interview 4) "...one of the key things is. There's a constant communication between our credit department and our LBS practitioners and myself to keep that connection alive" (Interview 5) "I can attribute the relationship that is established with our credit program through relationship building" (Interview 5)	"...we are beholden to Eios right. That's the employed management system and our Staff in the building. They use a different one. It's called aspen, and they use has been for reporting into anything credit and so I feel like my eternal struggle is to try to say, "Listen, I get it. That, Aspen is important to you, but without a EioS we don't get funded like this is critically important"...that where there's a bit of a

		"So if we provide the services it's our duty to inform them of what's available and where they're going, and how they're going to get there" (Interview 5) "...they have the ability as an instructor to say, I'm going to go and investigate that for you. They provide that information firsthand because they're able to speak to that credit department who is just down the hall, and I met another site" (Interview 5) "So it's all that communication piece. I think that that is part and parcel for the relationship building. It's key" (Interview 5) "We have really right people in this building, and they have great ideas and wonderful suggestions. So the first step obviously is to communicate, to meet with the staff and talk about opportunity" (Interview 9)	challenge or just you know what part of it is we're triplicating the data. The data is like the student registers 2 or 3 times minimum" (Interview 4)
Relationship building	All	"Right away we gradually did that last fall. It said the heck. With this we're coming back full time. But in the interim I was going over to the credit people and introducing myself talking to them. ...It's, relationship, building..." (Interview 3) "So if you don't build a relationship, you won't have a relationship. If you don't continue that relationship, you won't have a relationship. So you're like actively relationship building always..." (Interview 3) "Our instructors build relationships with our students, and if our students are stuck they're going to help them. Yeah, and that's what happens" (Interview 6) "[Adult} education instructors are different. They build relationships with their learners" (Interview 6) "We meet with heads of department once a month, and it's constant continuous education. You think	"...sometimes people just don't get along: We know that. And we'll lose students because they don't like the personality of an instructor (Interview 6) "What I mean is, I think i'm trying to describe the relationships really that have been developed, and that could flip, of course, with the change of a teacher" (Interview 7) "Does our board know what sort of: collaborations we're having here for the success of our learners? Not as much, and that's partly on us for not, you know, putting it out there. But I think. there's sort of a an issue across boards where

		people know, and at times you find out they don't, but at different levels. But the people we connect with directly they know, they get it" (Interview 7) "We have a really great relationship with the staff and the LBS program...and the relationship between all the staff and their students is very strong because they've had them typically for quite a while, and they really don't relationship with those students, so they're able to also encourage them" (Interview 9)	continuing education is like a mystery to the rest of the boards. and so we're working to try and change that across boards" (Interview 8) "There's also a great working relationship between our credit teachers and our LBS staff...but we're not really bringing the LBS instructors and credit teachers together. I think that we could work on that" (Interview 9)
Trust	5	"...and once again it's that whole thing like right now I'm lucky I've got a great principal who's on board, and he understands us, and he likes what we do..." (Interview 3) "It's the people that are at the grassroots, the guidance counselors, the teachers. So they're aware. So if they're having anybody that's having problems they know that they can send the we trust us to take their students and send them back when they're ready" (Interview 3) So that's why I go beyond the principal, because the principal is only a figurehead. It's the people that are at the grassroots, the guidance counselors, the teachers. So they're aware. So if they're having anybody that's having problems, they know that they can send the we trust us to take their students and send them back when they're ready" (Interview 3) "...it's also respecting from my from me as a manager respecting and knowing what it's like to be in the trenches as an instructor. I think there's some value there that you know. I know what they go through" (Interview 5) "These are adult learners who Haven't necessarily had good	

		experiences in education. It takes so much courage for them to just walk through the front doors of this building, to walk into a school again. And so we really we want to build trust, and we want them to know that they can be successful just because they haven't had success in the past doesn't mean they can't now" (Interview 9)	
Learner Centered		"The real goal here is not to help the LBS program or the PSW Program it is to help the learner, and I think as long as we get that straight from the beginning we're going to be okay" (Interview 3) "I'm here for the best interest of the learner. If they're for credit, I send them to credit. If they're not, I'll keep them, and then I'll send them to credit when they're done. I think what's successful now for us is that we work hard and not just me. My staff and I work hard at building those relationships with credit." (Interview 3) "Many of the credit or many of the LBS students will eventually go through the PLAR process prior learning, assessment and recognition, and the current vice principal is also the assessor so once we are able to get our learners to the place where they feel comfortable, and have enough confidence to be able to move forward. Then we introduce them to the PLAR process, and which is a very easy going non-threatening experience, for them. and if they're able to agree to wanting to do the test." (Interview 13)	

Appendix B: Professional Coordination

Sub-Topic	How many interviews	Sample Quotes Positives	Sample Quotes negatives
Partnership (Formal/Informal)	All	"...when I say informal, or what I mean is a very relaxed in the sense of comfortable relationship between us and the credit teachers" (Interview 7) "It was a formal relationship, simply because our principal Elma said that this is this is what it's going to be, and you're all going to be in this room together. But the relationships that develop are very informal, and they flow" (Interview 1) "I'm lucky I've got a great principal who's on board, and he understands us, and he likes what we do, and mind you, I work my tail off to educate him, and what we're doing" (Interview 3) "There has to be a buy in, to the stuff right? And again, I'm blessed that I have that. But I think it's also respecting from my from me as a manager respecting and knowing what it's like to be in the trenches as an instructor" (Interview 5)	"...a year down the road I could get another principal who won't buy in [and] that could be problematic" (Interview 3)
Collaboration	5	"But I was running around with the principal today...you know, we were working on the movement of this classroom that was just talking about, but it's a cooperative thing, you know...I give him this he gives me that" (Interview 3) "Prior to me, the person who is in the in the role. They were a former principal. They also were the manager of our credit program, and so we ended up having a real benefit of someone who knew both programs inside and out, and could see how they could pair well together. And so that just kind of became what we	

		did" (Interview 8) "if you're committed to not just operating in a silo and sort of reaching out. And you're learning about other programs and seeing the needs and understanding. You know, ways that you could connect. Yeah, a lot of things can become possible" (Interview 8) "I'm really excited by the PSW collaboration right now. So absolutely...well, I mean I love the active partnership, and just the idea of the shared vision..." (Interview 3)	
Role of Guidance	All	"This past couple of weeks for credit. Lot of some people didn't make the cut. The guidance counselor now know me well enough that they can walk around the corner to my office. Say [to me] I think this person's for you. You can maybe help them" (Interview 3) "We started to look at a model where learners would come in to the building. There'd be students who want to do complete their High School diplomas...they meet with the guidance counselor. The guidance counselor does a credit summary with them, and then the credit summary is depending on what they need on their credit summary, if they need grade 9 and 10 credit. So the equivalent to grade 9...their credit Summary is sent to us, and then we do a registration, and we put them in where we will work with them on their reading and writing and math skills to prepare for the player assessments like with that kind of our end goal, and then they do the player assessment with our instructor. But then it gets sent to a credit teacher or a marker to do the assessment with our instructor" (Interview 4) "We've been working with the guidance counselor ever since, as	

		far as I can remember. And so, if they want to go on to college or any post-secondary education, the guidance counselor is very much involved. But if that person is onsite, we also have the PLAR assessors which function as guidance counselors, and we also offer the correspondence program, and that's been around for many years, and the person persons who are in charge of that also function in that role as well." (Interview 13)	
Formal Intake Process	3	"It's a standard intake that I developed over the years. And when the pandemic came along I converted all of my documents onto Microsoft forms. So now I can do this online or I can do it in person" (Interview 1)	"The amount of work administrative, wise that the instructors have to... that takes them away from the learner. It's ridiculous the amount of paperwork that I have to do" (Interview 5)
Intended Milestones	5	"...for the LBS learner, that relationship, they're a part of our program. There's that constant discussion about you, because, LBS...is primarily you have to walk in and articulate a goal. [Student wonders] how do I get there? Well, we'll get you there, don't worry, and that conversation is constant" (Interview 5)	"The only challenge, though, that we do have is the ministry has its own expectations, and so their criteria is that the learners have to have milestones. They have to have a culminating task at the end of the time before they move on, and sometimes it takes longer for some students than it does for others...some will start, and then there's family issues, or there's economic issues or the substance abuse issues, and they'll drop out for a while, and then they'll come back. So we have to keep the lines of communication open. Credit sometimes would like them to come sooner rather than later, and that's understandable. I mean there is a business model for credit as well. So we're constantly navigating suitability measures with

			the ministry and targets..." (Interview 13)
Co-Location	6	"...we are in that room in that big gym room. We've got literacy and basic skills, teachers, and we've got the grade 9, 10 PLAR teachers that are credit teachers, and by the way, they used to be my LBS teachers. That's really good, because if they see somebody who is struggling, they think, wow, you'd be great for the literacy and basic skills program... Teachers and everybody is just mixing in. It's really good" (Interview 1) "The latest thing that I've been working on here is that they started a PSW Program. And I got the idea once again from CESBA...they were talking about, you know PSW Programs working hand in hand with LBS I'm thinking there we just got one, so why can't we do that so? And then I went on a break. And who do I run into? Is our PSW Coordinator...and came up with a plan for the Principal, we said, okay, we're in the same building. How can we use each other, so to speak, right. And so we, she said, what I need the most, I said, what is it that you need? And she said. What I need the most is computers, they need to have access. Understand how to use word and PowerPoint and we offer word in workshops. So what we did is we made one. We streamlined it so that it was PD Day, PSW focused, and we just did 2 days full of training, and we gave them certificates, and they were happy" (Interview 3)	"And so you know, you need to have so many seats filled, and if you don't have those seats filled. So then what they started doing for a while, and we used to have a class at another location that we ended up closing because they just weren't sending us people anymore" (Interview 3)
Referrals & PLAR	All	"we have is a proven track record here. The all the guidance counselors here know that if they can't pass their entrance exam there, or they're struggling to pass the entrance exam. They don't, just take them. They've brought	"If they're in LBS, and their instructor is doing the PLAR with everyone else in the room, and they're ready for PLAR. The instructor knows they're ready for PLAR. Just let them do

		them down the hall, and they know that when they come to us they're gonna get that students gonna get some personal attention" (Interview 3) "LBS is very stringent on referrals and referral protocols. And how did this person hear about the program? But from a credit perspective, it's ironic that they don't have the same restrictions in paperwork" (Interview 5) 'it's just the way we do business. As an LBS department. We know what services exist, how we can serve an individual to the best of our ability and access those services, either credit, or employment services...unfortunately we had to go and find somebody a shelter, we always ask others what they know, be confident and go and ask the questions" (Interview 5) "We make referrals to credit. If a learner expresses an interest that they want to go ahead with credit, then we try and make that arrangement as soon as possible, so they can have their PLAR assessment if they need to have a PLAR assessment." (Interview 13)	PLAR, you know. I mean, obviously do the right PLAR. Don't just give them all 5 booklets" (Interview 1)

Appendix C: Learner Success

Sub-Topic	How many interviews	Sample Quotes Positives	Sample Quotes Challenges
Safe and supportive environment	8	"come to us, and we will guide you down the path that you need to go to and get you there" (Interview 5) "...when you Haven't had success previously in education is really tough: So if we can offer a space for them to do the work and be supported by it. Just hey? What do you think this means? They are going to get through their courses" (Interview 6) "Really, the students are already coming to our instructors, and they're vulnerable. Coming back to education. You are very vulnerable, and I think our instructors show their own vulnerability. They're not hiding their lives...I remember what you were going through, you know, like those personal conversations create the relationship. And staying on top of wat's available in our communities...knowing where people can go" (Interview 6)	"Well just for you to understand the type of learners that we do have They've got anxiety issues. We've got some that have depression, high functioning, autism, bipolar, schizophrenia, test anxiety...substance abuse. They've been on IEPs in school their school experiences. So these are the type of learners that we have." (Interview 13)
Responsive to individual needs	All	"The nice thing is, it's very clients centered. So the focus. The focus is always on what you want to do. For example, I have some students. I have a lot of students that are referred from our English as second language program, and the students usually tell me that they really like LBS because we have a reading and writing program" (Interview 1) "This brings us back to what LBS is. Learner centered, goal oriented, outcomes based. That's what we do" (Interview 5) "[It's important] not to minimize the success of it. A person who just who comes in and...only earns one credit like that. That's still a success...success is different for everyone" (Interview 9) "...very relaxed in the sense of comfortable relationship between us and the credit teachers. So, as students are working with us in academic upgrading and preparing to	"...we do so much and really the instructors and the staff and everybody in adult education are not recognized for it from a ministry perspective..." (Interview 5)

		move to credit. There's lots of ongoing conversations about readiness and trying to introduce the student. We're a small site to introduce the student to the teacher. So this is a real comfort level before a student progresses" (Interview 7) "[learners are at the center] ...always, and we have always tried to maintain that. And if, for example, there may have been challenges with timelines, we always provide support to the learner, and help to validate, why, it might take longer for them." (Interview 13)	
Seamless transition	4	"We work hand in hand in that. for example, if they're in an English class taking a credit English class. They can now take numeracy upgrading with us and not be penalized, they can do both at the same time, whereas in the past that relationship didn't exist and the ministries didn't see eye to eye. So that's come a long way that's evolved as well" (Interview 5) "...it just promotes the success of the students, so they're not solely focused in LBS, and then once they finish LBS: See you later, you're going to credit" (Interview 5) "We can point them in whatever direction they need to go, and if they need professional counseling, or they need housing support, or there's food insecurity. All of though we have a wrap-around service as well, and we've been trained through the literacy network, we can connect them anywhere that they need to go." (Interview 13)	"...when there is a let's say, a misplaced student who's gone directly to a credit or to apply that's struggling. The teacher might identify them, and then you get. Then you usually have a tearful student making their way to LBS to academic upgrading. and we boost them back up and send them back again" (Interview 8)
Milestones achieved	All	"So we always like to see people meeting their goals...I think that the successes have to be [celebrated]. And we celebrate that because we have little celebrations in class for them" (Interview 1) "I can't tell you how many times I stand at the back of the adult credit graduation, and I and I and I say, I know that person. I know that person. I know that person because I They had been through my program at some point" (Interview 3)	

		"I tell you, when an adult learner is successful, there is nothing like it, and maybe I'm being selfish, or maybe I truly believe that there is nothing better, and that's what keeps me going, it is. It's quite the moment when you're learning in a school. You know we just had a 62 year old, come back, and she was in tears, and you know, and being successful" (Interview 5) One of the big pieces is the commitment of the staff to the success of the learners right, and you just all of us want the best for the learners" (Interview 8) "...like going to those graduations, but they're like amazing, some of them. Okay, fantastic. So you know you know the sense of it's different. it's different than a particular graduation, because you understand all the barriers and the hurdles people have had, and sometimes, like you know, their kids are there, or, like you know, different people are there supporting them through this, and you know some people might have been trying to do this for many years, and it's a lot of stops and starts, and some people, it's you know, come to Canada and had to start like almost entirely again" (Interview 8) "...our classroom can become little communities. and that then you've got this group of community learners that are, you know, cheerleading for you as well. So I think that plays a big role in the success of moving through credits in our rural programs" (Interview 6) "You know the success of the student is ultimately the goal right? What's going to help to make that student most successful? And again, in conversations with students, what's their goal?" (Interview 9)	