HOW ADULT LEARNERS ARE SUPPORTED THROUGH ADULT EDUCATION CREDIT PROGRAMS ACROSS THE PROVINCE:
FINAL REPORT

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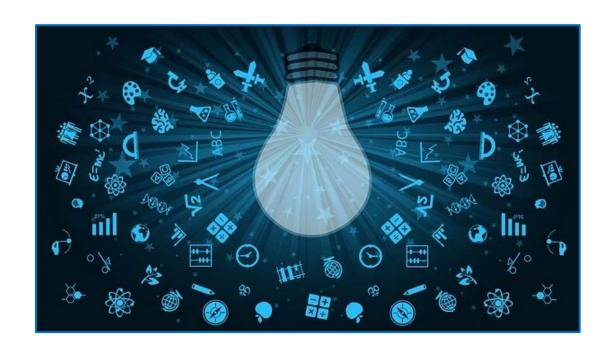### July 2022

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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

Adult and continuing education (A&CE) programs play an important role in the lives of individuals and communities. They have the power to transform adults by equipping them with the skills they need for success in life, work, and further education. Adults join A&CE programs for a variety of reasons, which include the following: completing a high school diploma, upgrading courses to pursue post-secondary education, retraining for a new job/career, and acquiring new skills. Many adults who take part in A&CE come from vulnerable populations and have experienced personal hardships (Youmans et al., 2017). With this mind, adult and continuing education programs provide an opportunity to promote equitable outcomes for adults with respect to employment opportunities, post-secondary education, and career pathways.

As graduation rates in Ontario continue to climb in the K-12 system, there may be fewer Ontarians without a high school diploma (OSSD) that need to access A&CE programs. However, the decrease in adults without an Ontario diploma may be offset by an increase in the adult immigration population. These newer cohorts may be harder to serve, with more challenging barriers. In the spring of 2021, CESBA commissioned Drs. Godden and Youmans to conduct a province-wide study of adult and continuing education programs in Ontario to investigate how they support the learning and achievement of adult learners. The overarching research question for the study was:

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

To respond to this research question, online surveys were developed and distributed to adult learners, teachers, instructors, guidance counsellors, and administrators in A&CE programs across Ontario. This report presents the findings from this research study and discusses their implications for A&CE programs. We hope information in this report will be used to strengthen adult and continuing education programs across the province of Ontario, and beyond.

Purpose

The purpose of the CESBA A&CE study was to examine how adult learners are supported in their learning and achievement through for credit A&CE programs across the province. Main topics of investigation were the delivery of PLAR, adult learner supports and enablers, adult learner challenges and barriers, and best practices and innovations for supporting adult learner success. Information obtained from this study highlights the strengths of existing A&CE programs in Ontario and offers insights into how they can be improved to better support adult learners.

Method

Drs. Youmans and Godden collected data from 18 participating district school boards (eight from eastern Ontario, four from northern Ontario, three from western Ontario, two from central Ontario, and one from Toronto) and one Indigenous post-secondary institution. Appropriate ethics clearance was obtained prior to data collection. Data was collected during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years from A&CE adult learners, teachers, instructors, guidance counsellors, and administrators via online surveys. Three separate online surveys were developed and distributed for the purpose of the CESBA A&CE study: one for adult learners; one for teachers, instructors, and guidance counsellors; and one for administrators. Survey question topics included: the delivery of PLAR, adult learner supports and enablers, adult learner challenges and barriers, and innovative practices for supporting adult learner success. All three surveys included closed-ended questions and open-response questions about A&CE supports. Quantitative data analysis was conducted on closed-ended responses using SPSS, a statistics software program. Open-ended 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 "to be a positive role model (5)" is reported, the number five (5) indicates that this response was communicated by five participants. Study results for each of the three participants

groups are presented, beginning with adult learners, followed by teachers, and ending with administrators.

Findings: Adult Learners

Two hundred and ninety-six adult learners from Ontario responded to the A&CE CESBA study survey. Adult learners' ages ranged from 18 to 71, with a median age of 30 years old. Sixty-eight percent of adult learners were female, 28% were male, and 2% preferred not disclose information about their gender. Twenty-two percent of adult learners were newcomers to Canada (i.e., arrived in Canada in the last five years), with a total of 38% of survey participants indicating they were immigrants. Twenty-seven percent of adult learners identified as a racial minority. Five percent of adult learners identified as being First Nations, Metis, or Inuit.

Adult learners were asked to identify why they were participating in A&CE from four possible options (see Table 1). Over half of adult learners (51%) indicated that they were completing their high school diploma. Twenty-eight percent of adult learners were taking part in A&CE to upgrade their high school courses so they could pursue post-secondary education, 10% were re-doing their credentials in the Canadian education system, and 10% were training for a new career.

Table 1. Adult Learner Responses About Why They Are Participating in A&CE

Reason for Participating in A&CE	% of Adult learners
To complete my high school diploma	51%
To upgrade high school courses so I can pursue post-secondary education	28%
Re-doing high school credentials in the Canadian education system	10%

| Retraining for a new career | 10% |

Immigrant adult learner responses about why they were participating in A&CE from four possible options differed somewhat from the entire sample of adult learners (see Table 2). Less half of adult immigrant learners (44%) indicated that they were completing their high school diploma. Twenty-seven percent of adult immigrant learners were taking part in A&CE to upgrade their high school courses so they could pursue post-secondary education, 24% were re-doing their credentials in the Canadian education system, and only 5% were training for a new career.

Table 2. Adult Immigrant Learner Responses About Why They Are Participating in A&CE

Reason for Participating in A&CE	% of Adult learners
To complete my high school diploma	44%
To upgrade high school courses so I can pursue post-secondary education	27%
Re-doing high school credentials in the Canadian education system	24%
Retraining for a new career	5%

Learners were asked an open-ended question about what helped them decide to join A&CE. Their explanations were in line with their reasons for participating in A&CE (n = 244). For example, many adult learners expressed joining because of their future aspirations. They indicated that they wanted:

- a high school diploma (61)
- to pursue post-secondary education (29)
- to pursue a new career or trade (17)
- a better future (15)

- to upgrade their education (15)
- to be a positive role model to their children (5)
- a (better) job (4)
- to gain a stronger command of the language (3)

Other adult learners indicated that the support of family and friends (21), A&CE staff/ high school guidance staff (12), self-motivation (9), and a community partner (2) helped them to make the decision to join A&CE. Other positive student motivators were related to the following A&CE program features:

- flexible programming (17)
- programs being free (9)
- convenient proximity of programs (4)
- particular program offerings, like in-person or online learning (3)
- time efficient programs (3)
- information/registration online (3)
- past positive program experiences (2)

Samples of adult learner responses for motivating factors are identified below.

Future aspirations

 "I have decided to finish my grade 12 so I could get my dream job."

"I've always wanted to have my high school diploma, so I decided that it was time to finish that goal."

"To improve myself and be able to get into college."

Support

"My mom and sister pushed me to get my high-school."

"The advice from my guidance counsellors helped me make my decision."

Program Features

 "Knowing I could do my correspondence at home and online."

"Evening classes allowed me to keep my day job."

"It was easy to sign up online!"

"It was inexpensive and local."

Adult learners were asked about what helps them stay committed to A&CE. Many adult learners indicated that they focus on their personal goals of:

- completing high school (59)
- post-secondary education (33)
- career/employment (25)
- a better future (17)

Other influences adult learners identified as helping them stay committed to A&CE can be categorized into program-related and personal factors. Program-related factors included the following:

- teachers/tutors/guidance staff (41)
- enjoyment of learning/positive learning environment (30)
- flexible programs (8)
- time efficient programs (3)
- timely feedback from teachers/markers (3)

Personal factors were as follows:

- personal strength/determination (19)
- having children (13)
- setting goals and working towards them (13)
- support of family and friends (12)
- being organized – time management, setting up routines (3)

Adult learners were asked to select what type of learning they normally do in their A&CE program from five main options (see Table 3). The majority of adult learners (51%) indicated that they did online learning. Eighteen percent of adult learners did correspondence/self-study online, 16% attended in-person classes 10% did hybrid learning, 2% had participated in multiple types of learning, and 1% did a dual credit program.

Table 3. Adult Learner Responses About What Type of Learning They Do in A&CE

Type of Learning	% of Adult Learners
online learning	51%
correspondence/self-study online	18%
in-person classes	16%
hybrid learning (in-person learning combined with online learning)	10%
correspondence/self-study books/print	2%
multiple types	2%
dual credit program	1%

N = 294

When asked to identify how they learned about adult and continuing education with an open-response question, adult learners reported seven key ways (see Table 4). Thirty-one percent of adult learners found out about A&CE through a family member, friend, or colleague, and 26% learned about it through an online search or research. Other ways that adult learners found out about A&CE were because it was known in the community (15%), through a community partner (13%), from high school staff (8%), prior experience (5%), and ads (2%),

Table 4. Adult Learner Responses to How They Learned About A&CE

Method for Learning About A&CE	% of Adult Learners
Family member or friend	31%
Online search/research	26%
Known in community	15%
Community partner	13%
High school staff	8%
Prior experience	5%

Ads	2%

N = 259

Learning and Holistic Supports

Adult learners were asked to identify all (i.e., check all that apply) the learning supports they received through A&CE based on a list of five primary supports (see Table 5). Eighty percent of adult learners reported receiving one or more learning supports. Of the 20% of adult learners who reported not receiving supports, 12% indicated they were not needed and 8% communicated that they were not available. The most frequently reported learning support was guidance counselling, which was used by 43% of adult learners. The other supports reported were basic skills development (26%), technology support (25%), tutoring (23%), skills inventory (20%), individual programming (17%), and other (6%).

Table 5. Learning Supports in A&CE

Learning Support	% of Adult learners Receiving the Support
guidance counselling	43%
basic skills development (e.g., literacy and numeracy)	26%
technology support (e.g., someone available to answer technology questions, ability to borrow a computer)	25%
tutoring	23%
skills inventory to identify your strengths and weaknesses	20%
Individual programming	17%
Other	6%

N = 271

Adult learners were also asked to identify all the holistic supports (i.e., check all that apply) they received in adult and continuing education programs based on a list of six primary supports (see Table 6). Forty-nine percent of adult learners reported receiving at least one holistic support. Of the 51% of adult learners who did not access holistic supports, 23% indicated that holistic supports were unavailable, while 28% indicated that they were not required. The most frequent holistic supports adult learners received were: mental health support (31%), referrals to other agencies (16%), food (14%), transportation (12%), childcare (11%), and other (7%). The least frequent holistic support was clothing (2%).

Table 6. Holistic Supports in A&CE

Holistic Support	% of Adult learners Receiving the Support
Mental health	22%
Referrals to other agencies	16%
Food	14%
Transportation	12%
Childcare	11%
Clothing	2%
Other	7%

N = 206

An open-response survey question that asked adult learners to describe how they would like to be supported in A&CE received responses from 124 adult learners (N = 124). The most frequently reported answers were:
- more teacher support (23)
- increased program flexibility/greater course options (9)
- guidance counselling (7)
- employment/career support (5)
- face-to-face learning (5)

- financial support (5)

- transportation (5)

- greater access to tutoring supports (5)

- support navigating A&CE programs (4)

- updated courses/course materials (3)

- peer support (i.e., study groups; 3)

- food (3)

- mental health support (2)

- childcare (2)

Adult learners were asked to identify what would make it easier for more people to participate in A&CE programs in an open-response survey question. Responses from 240 adult learners (N = 240) identified the following factors:

- greater program flexibility (59)

- increase awareness of A&CE programs/advertising (43)

- more learner supports (29)

- improve the quality of adult education (18)

- increase program/course options (13)

- develop an easier intake process/greater access to programs (11)

- reduce costs/provide financial aid (10)

- reduce the stigma associated with adult education (8)

- help adult learners develop self confidence/motivation (5)

- make parking more accessible/cover parking costs (3)

- provide needed technology for adult learners (e.g., laptops; 3)

- make people aware of PLAR (2)

- provide childcare (1)

- provide transportation (1)

PLAR

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. When asked if they knew about PLAR, only 54% of adult learners (N = 230) knew what it was. Further analysis of PLAR awareness by reason for participating in A&CE revealed differences among the four main categories of adult learners (see Table 7). Adult learners who working towards completing their high school diploma were most aware of PLAR (64%), followed by adult learners re-doing their high school credentials in the Canadian education system (50%), and adult learners upgrading courses to pursue post-secondary education (39%). Adult learners least aware of PLAR (27%) were those retraining for a career.

Table 7. Adult Learner Awareness of PLAR by Reason for Participating in A&CE

Reason for Participating in A&CE	% of Adult Learners Aware of PLAR
To complete my high school diploma (N = 117)	64%
Re-doing high school credentials in the Canadian education system (N = 16)	50%
To upgrade high school courses so I can pursue post-secondary education (N = 59)	39%
Retraining for a new career (N = 15)	27%

N = 207

Adult learners who knew about PLAR were asked to identify how they learned about it from a list of main methods (see Table 8). Forty-eight percent learned about it from a guidance counsellor, 21% heard about it from a teacher, and 7% were introduced to PLAR through advertisements. Other ways that adult learners learned about PLAR were

from online/school websites (5%), a principal/administrator (5%), peers (5%), an administrative secretary (4%), a community partner (2%), other (2%), and family (1%). Fifty-six percent of adult learners who knew about PLAR indicated that they had earned PLAR credits. The range of PLAR credits earned was between one and 26 (the maximum amount of PLAR credits that can be earned), with the median being 10.

Table 8. Adult Learner Responses to How They Learned About PLAR

Method for Learning About PLAR	% of Adult learners
Guidance counsellor	48%
Teacher	21%
Advertisements	7%
Online/school websites	5%
Principal/administrator	5%
Peers	5%
Administrative secretaries	4%
Community partner	2%
Other	2%
Family	1%

N = 155

In an open-response question about what the PLAR experience was like, the majority of adult learners' answers (N = 49) were affirmative. Their comments were categorized as follows:

- very positive/positive (26)
- very easy/easy (17)
- challenging/a little challenging (3)
- okay/fine (3)
- reflective (1)

One adult learner explained, "It was great! I got credit for things I had learned in life." Another adult learner appreciated how it helped make graduating from high school more attainable: "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." The experience was "motivating and engaging" for an adult learner who reported how the process helped her "focus in on what I want to do in my career and helped me understand what skills and support is necessary."

When asked what they liked about PLAR in an open-response question, adult learners (N = 59) indicated that they liked that it:

- helped them earn credits towards their high school diploma quickly (22)
- honoured their prior schooling and life experiences (18)
- was easy and straightforward (16)
- supported learning (7)
- teacher/guidance counsellor support (2)
- was self-paced (1)

The benefit of PLAR was summarized by one student: "It was great to have my life experiences recognized and to have them count towards my diploma."

In an open-response survey question, adult learners (N = 15) suggested the following changes for the PLAR process:

- increased teacher support during PLAR (4)
- raise greater awareness about PLAR (3)
- standardize the process across the province and country (1)
- increase the number of credits you can earn through PLAR (1)
- provide more PLAR options (1)
- make it accessible at home (1)
- quicker turn around time so you know if you have earned the credits (1)
- have financial courses or budgeting as part of PLAR (1)
- include better PLAR support materials (i.e., online videos; 1)
- make all credits available through PLAR (1)

At the end of the survey when adult learners were asked if they would like to tell us anything else about their A&CE experience, they indicated the following:

- it was a positive experience for them
- adults appreciated flexible programs and supportive learning environments
- wrap-around supports, like tutoring and food are helpful
- more teacher support is needed
- more options and convenient locations are needed in A&CE
- courses should be updated
- there is a need to help adults ease back into the school setting
- adults may need additional supports to prepare them for the workplace/post-secondary education
- there should be a way for adult learner with foreign credentials and proficiency in a subject to obtain credit for it

One adult learner communicated her positive experience: ""It's a very helpful and patient program, which is exactly what people like me need when facing the challenges I did."

Findings: Teachers

There were 64 responses to the A&CE teacher survey. Forty-five responses were from Ontario-certified teachers, twelve were from Ontario-certified guidance counsellors, five were from instructors, and two were unidentified. The amount of time teachers and instructors had worked in A&CE ranged from one to 30 years, with the average being 11 years. They had one to 25 years of experience teaching in an online or blended format, with an average of four years experience. Participating guidance counsellors' experience ranged from three to 20 years, with the average being eight years.

For the sake of simplicity, we will refer to teachers, instructors, and guidance counsellors as "teachers" in this section. Many of the teacher questions were open-ended. With this in mind, numbers are reported next to responses to indicate how many people provided the response.

Through an open-response question, teachers (N = 64) identified the skills they focus on developing in adult learners. The following soft skills and hard skills were reported:

- Communication skills (15)
- Self-advocacy (13)
- Literacy (12)
- Problem solving (12)
- Critical thinking (11)
- Technology/digital literacy (11)
- Academic skills (10)
- Responsibility/independence (10)
- Perseverance/resilience (8)
- Research (8)
- Soft skills (7)
- Collaboration/teamwork/cooperation (6)
- Creativity (6)
- Numeracy/financial skills (5)
- Time management (5)
- Organization (5)
- Workplace skills (4)
- Planning/goal setting (4)
- Confidence (3)
- Flexibility/adaptability (3)
- Mental health (e.g., self-care, stress management, social emotional stability; 3)
- Enduring skills/transferable skills (2)
- Building strong arguments with evidence (2)
- Life management (1)
- Initiative (1)
- Citizenship (1)

It is interesting to note that the majority of skills identified by teachers were soft skills, with only a few hard skills (i.e., literacy, numeracy, research, technology skills) reported.

Learning and holistic supports

Teachers (N = 63) reported the strategies they use to support learning in an open-response question. The most frequent reported strategies for supporting adult learners were:

- Extra learning support (e.g., tutoring, extra help sessions, one-on-one support, resources; 18)
- Supportive classroom environment (12)
- Regular communication/check-ins (10)
- Feedback (e.g., formative feedback, peer feedback; 9)
- Technology (e.g., recording live classes, Google Read and Write, etc.; 9)
- Scaffolding (6)
- Getting to know adult learners and their needs/caring (6)
- Relevant examples/discussions (6)
- Variety of instructional methods, activities, and assignments (6)
- Staff supports (e.g., student success teacher, guidance counsellor, social worker, tutor, LBS instructors; 5)
- Modifications for adult learners with special education needs (4)
- Provide options for learners (3)
- Differentiated instruction/assess readiness (3)
- Addressing individual learning styles (2)
- Flexibility (2)
- Clear expectations and instructions (2)
- Course orientations (1)
- Incorporating identity, culture, and individuality (1)
- Course design (1)

In an open-response question about what supports were needed to promote the success of adult learners, teachers (N = 63) identified the following:

- Recognition and removal of barriers (e.g., childcare, mental health, food banks, financial support; 20)
- Flexibility/multiple learning options (19)
- Learning support (e.g., tutors, extra help, language learning support, resources; 15)
- Access to technology (e.g., computers, reliable internet) and technology support (15)
- Guidance counsellors (9)
- Teacher support (8)
- Special education support/student success teachers (8)
- Support system (e.g., community partners, peers; 6)
- Safe classroom space/place to work and connect with others (5)
- Digital skills (4)
- Regular feedback (3)
- Social service workers (3)
- High quality instruction/curriculum (3)
- Meaningful course content (2)

- Clear instructions (2)
- Increased funding (2)
- Lifelong learning skills (1)
- Emotional support and encouragement (1)
- Recruitment counsellors for post-secondary institutions (1)

Enablers and barriers in adult and continuing education

Teachers answered open-response questions about enablers and barriers to access for adult learners (see Table 9). The ten most frequent teacher responses (N = 50) to enablers of access were school website/ advertising (12), referrals through community partners (10), varied methods of delivery (10), technology availability through the school (9), guidance counsellors (8), dedicated staff (6), flexibility (4), multiple locations (4), online tools and supports (4), and PLAR (3). The ten most frequent teacher responses (N = 55) to barriers to access were competing time commitments (22), lack of technology/internet (21), lack of mental health/addictions support (15), lack of transportation (12), lack of computer literacy (11), and lack of childcare (11), poverty/financial instability (11), unaware of existence and availability of A&CE in the community (7), insufficient language skills (6), lack of flexibility of program/learning support offerings (5).

Table 9. Enablers and Barriers to Access to A&CE for Adult Learners Identified by Teachers

Enablers of Access to A&CE	Barriers to Access of A&CE
- School website/ advertising (12) - Referrals through community partnerships (10) - Varied methods of delivery (10) - Technology availability through the school (9) - Guidance counsellors (8) - Dedicated staff (6) - Flexibility (4) - Multiple locations (4) - Online tools and supports (4) - PLAR (3)	- Competing time commitments (work, family, etc.) (22) - Lack of technology/internet (21) - Lack of mental health/addictions support (15) - Lack of transportation (12) - Lack computer literacy (11) - Lack of childcare (11) - Poverty/financial instability (11) - Lack of mental health/addictions support (15) - Unaware of existence and availability of A&CE in the community (7)

• Partnerships with non-credit programs, like ESL (2) • Online registration (2) • Known in community (2) • Transit passes/transportation discounts (2) • Childcare availability (2) • Additional programs to support adult learners (2) • Tutoring availability (1) • Emphasis on co-op credits (1) • Pilot hybrid program (1) • Central location (1) • Food (1)	• Insufficient language skills (6) • Lack of flexibility of program/learning support offerings (5) • Lack of confidence (4) • Housing (4) • Lack of physical space/place for learning (2) • Lack basic skills (2) • Personal health issues (2) • Waiting lists for classes/intake (2) • Lack of personal identification cards/past education documents (2) • Stigma (1) • Require permanent residency to participate (1) • Lack of program funding that results in courses being cancelled (1) • Negative past experiences with school (1) • Too many students in class (1) • Outdated curriculum (1) • Lack of professional development in A&CE (1) • Lack of support (1)

In addition, teachers were asked to identify enablers and barriers to adult learner outcomes in A&CE via open response (see Table 10). The ten most frequent teacher responses (N = 50) to enablers of outcomes for adult learners were experienced and supportive staff (18), flexible programs (16), availability of one-on-one support/tutoring (9), supportive adult programs (e.g., co-op, dual credit, school to work; 7), regular check-ins/communication with adult learners (6), PLAR (6), guidance counsellor support (6), LBS/core essentials programs (5), ESL programs (5), and community partners (5). The ten most frequent teacher responses (N = 53) to barriers of outcomes for adult learners were other time/commitments/responsibilities (30), lack of internet/technology (14), lack of childcare (11), mental health challenges/addictions (10), lack of academic skills/growth mindset (9), lack of digital literacy (7), insufficient language skills (6), lack of transportation (6), lack of learning supports, and financial instability (5).

Table 10. Enablers and Barriers to Outcomes for Adult Learners in A&CE Identified by Teachers

Enablers of Outcomes in A&CE	Barriers to Outcomes in A&CE
- Experienced and supportive staff (18) - Flexible programs (16) - Availability of one-on-one support/ tutoring (9) - Supportive adult-focused learning programs (e.g., co-op, dual credit, school to work; 7) - Supportive adult-focused learning programs (e.g., co-op, dual credit, school to work; 7) - Regular check-ins/communication with adult learners (6) - PLAR (6) - Guidance counsellor support (6) - LBS/core essentials programs (5) - ESL programs (5) - Community partners (5) - Technology provision (4) - Special education resources/staff (4) - Online tools and supports (4) - Wellness/social worker support (1) - Credit recovery (1) - Resource provision (1) - Technology training for adult learners (1) - Childcare availability (1) - Culture of care (1) - Intake assessments (1) - PD support (1) - Focus on mental health (1)	- Other time commitments/ responsibilities (30) - Lack of internet/technology (14) - Lack of childcare (11) - Mental health challenges/ addictions (10) - Lack of academic skills/growth mindset (9) - Lack of digital literacy (7) - Insufficient language skills (6) - Lack of transportation (6) - Lack of learning support (because there are no allocated funds for; 5) - Financial instability (5) - Personal health issues (4) - Lack of self-confidence/self-sabotage (4) - Lack of access to high quality in-person learning (3) - Lack of resources (2) - Lack of support (2) - Program inaccessibility (1) - Lack of clear direction/goal setting (1) - Housing (1) - Lack of physical place/space for learning (1) - Lack of personal determination/motivation (1)

When asked for suggestions about removing barriers for adult learners in an open response question, teachers (N = 52) communicated the following:

- Improve funding for A&CE so adult learners receive appropriate learning supports (15)
- Childcare provision (12)
- Provision/lending of technology (10)
- More flexible schedules/program delivery (8)
- Learning skills training/foundational courses (8)

- Availability of in-person learning/support (6)
- Digital literacy training (6)
- Community partnerships/wrap around services (6)
- Supportive adult-centred learning programs (e.g., co-op, dual credit, school to work, employment experience; 6)
- Transportation funds (5)
- Mental health supports (4)
- Partnerships with LBS to reduce learning gaps and prepare adults for credit pathways (4)
- Train A&CE teachers and treat them all equitably (3)
- Language skill development support (2)
- Partnering with community sites (2)
- Financial literacy training (2)
- Streamline the intake process (1)
- Opportunities for adult learners and staff to upgrade skills (1)
- Financial support for adult learners (1)
- Enable A&CE teachers to connect and share best practices (1)
- On-site library/resource centre for adult learners (1)
- Smaller class sizes (1)
- Greater flexibility with assessment and evaluation policies (1)
- Effective intake assessments (1)
- Remove stigma (1)
- Adult learning incentives (1)
- Advisory board for A&CE of staff and adult learners at each school board
- Political support (1)

Best practices and innovations in adult and continuing education

Thirty-one teachers who completed the survey indicated that they had participated in the Adult Education Strategy (AES) commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Education from 2016 to 2019. Teachers were from the following four partnership regions: eastern Ontario, western Ontario, northern Ontario, central Ontario, and Toronto region. In open-response questions, teachers reported learning about the following best practices and innovations from the AES:

- The distribution of a survey to adult learners to get a better understanding of their needs
- The importance of intake and PLAR supports

- Resource sharing with another school board
- Hosting a conference to provide PD for A&CE teachers, guidance counsellors, and administrators
- Using a slower intake process for the adult learners that discusses their education plan, PLAR, etc.
- Teaching adult learners computer skills to ensure their success
- Making online registration available for adult learners
- Using a hybrid model of three days at school and two days online per week

In an a follow-up open-response question about implementation of best practices and innovations, teachers identified incorporating the in their school boards to support adult learner achievement:

- A variety of high-quality instructional methods (e.g., hands-on activities, vertical non-permanent surfaces, group problem-solving, next generation simulators) and resources
- Incorporating adult-centred learning that is relevant
- Promoting interest-based learning
- Flexible scheduling
- Having a student success teacher to help develop adult learners develop metacognitive strategies and offer academic support
- Regular contact with adult learners/ weekly check-ins
- Supportive adult-focused learning programs (e.g., co-op)
- PLAR program
- Post PLAR credit package for those entering the world of work
- Online registration
- Blended/hybrid learning
- Exploring new opportunities for adults to earn credits
- Technology to support learning (e.g., online videos, interactive whiteboards, etc.)
- Single sign on for technology apps
- Differentiated instruction (e.g., chunking material)

- Clear and organized predictable structure to reduce anxiety

- Listening to adult learners (and their stories) and building community to be able to respond to their needs and plan relevant instructional activities

- Opportunities for self-assessment and self-reflection

- Adult learner feedback and course review for improvement

- Working on soft skills (e.g., collaboration, connection)

- Professional learning communities for A&CE staff to promote student achievement

- Using seed money from participation in the Adult Education Strategy to open three LBS programs (called Skills Training and Employment Preparation) in communities without an LBS presence

- Developing community partners

- Anti-racist and decolonizing pedagogy

While some of the identified practices and innovations require strategic multi-step implementation, some can be more easily introduced. Examples of easy to implement practices include the following: slower (more comprehensive) intake processes to better understand adult learners' individual needs, the organization of professional learning communities to improve adult learner outcomes, and providing adult learners with weekly check-ins by a staff member to support their success.

Findings: Administrators

Seventeen administrators from 14 school boards and one Indigenous post-secondary institution completed the administrator survey. Twelve respondents were principals, three were vice-principals, one was a manager, and one was unidentified. Administrators' years of experience ranged from six months to 23 years, with the average being eight years. The amount of time administrators had worked in A&CE ranged from one to 16 years, with the average being eight years.

When administrators were asked what percentage of learners complete their adult and continuing education programs, there was a wide difference in their responses, ranging from 7% to 90%. The average completion percentage for adult learners in these school boards was 61%.

When asked an open-response question about what processes support program completion for adult learners, administrators (N = 15) communicated the following:

- Supportive teachers (6)
- Guidance services and career pathway planning (6)
- Flexible programs (e.g., in-person, online, hybrid, drop-in evening classes; 6)
- Cross program supports (ESL to LBS to Credit; 4)
- Adult-centred learning programs (e.g., dual-credit programs, co-op; 3)
- PLAR – builds confidence (3)
- Caring adult for support (3)
- Re-engagement phone calls/strategies (2)
- Community partnerships (2)
- One-on-one support (e.g., online support sessions with a teacher; 2)
- Tutoring (2)
- Mental health support (e.g., special service counsellors home visits; 2)
- Sharing success stories of past adult learners
- Regular check-ins
- School-based team meetings
- Referrals to outside agencies
- Individualized pathways
- Adapting curriculum to make it relevant to adult learners
- Food and nutrition

When asked a follow-up open response question about the most important processes for promoting adult learner completion, administrators (N = 16) outlined the following:

- Regular check-ins (4)

- Connection with a caring adult/mentor/teacher (3)
- PLAR (3)
- Initial needs assessment and co-creation of an individualized plan (2)
- Flexible programs/timelines (3)
- Individual support (e.g., online help sessions; 2)
- Guidance counsellors
- Having adult learners come on site to complete some lessons (action research project by one board)
- Hybrid delivery model
- Provision of food
- Re-engagement
- Sharing student success stories
- Referrals from partner agencies
- Updating A&CE program information on website and advertising

When asked what percentage of adult learners completed their program, administrator responses from 12 school boards ranged from 7% to 90%. The average program completion rate for adult learners in these 12 boards was 60%.

Learning and holistic supports

Administrators were asked to identify all of the learning supports from a specified list (i.e., check all that apply; see Table 11) and all of the holistic supports from a specified list (i.e., check all that apply; see Table 12) provided for adult learners in their respective school boards (N = 15). There was variation in the amount of learning supports provided for adult learners by school boards. Four boards provided all six learning supports, three boards provided five learning supports, five provided four learning supports, and three boards provided three learning supports. Individualized programming was provided by all but one school board (14) and skills inventories and tutoring were provided by the least number of school boards (8). It is important to note that in school boards without guidance counsellors or part-time guidance counsellors, the following staff assisted with guidance and career pathway planning:

- teachers and site monitors
- secretaries, teachers, and principal
- department heads

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.

There was a lot of variation in the number of holistic supports provided for adult learners by school boards. Two boards provided all six holistic supports, two boards provided five holistic supports, two boards provided four holistic supports, three boards provided three holistic supports, two boards provided two holistic supports, two boards provided one holistic support, and one board provided no formal holistic supports. Referrals to

other agencies was the holistic support provided by the greatest number of school boards (11) and childcare was available at the least number of school boards (5).

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	

Additional supports for adult learners reported by administrators (N = 7) in an open-response question included the following:

- Adult-centred learning programs (e.g., co-op, dual credit)
- Each adult learner is assigned one caring adult to check in on them regularly; monthly staff meetings to discuss student concerns
- Connections to community supports and employment agencies

- School resource officer from the police department to develop positive relationships
- Partnerships with non-credit programs to prepare adult learners for credit pathways
- Cultural supports for adult learners, including a culture lead and opportunities to participate in cultural practices

When asked in an open-response question what supports they would like to see provided in their boards, administrators (N = 11) identified the following:

- Mental health supports (e.g., on-site mental health practitioner; 5)
- Childcare availability (3)
- Transportation supports (2)
- Special education
- Summer programming
- Work-based training opportunities (e.g., trades and apprenticeships)
- The development of a Personal Support Worker certification program
- Multiple drop-in centres for adult learners who are doing online programs
- Adult education reception centre
- Affordable housing for adult learners

PLAR

Administrators were asked to identify the percentage of their adult learners that were PLAR eligible. Administrator responses from 12 school boards ranged from 10% to 90%. According to administrators, all but one school board had a process in place for adult learners to be made aware of PLAR. When asked to describe their PLAR processes in an open-response question, administrators (N = 16) communicated the following:

- PLAR process is explained at registration and adult learners are referred accordingly (6)
- Guidance counsellors review PLAR with new adult learners at intake (4)
- PLAR information is available on the school website (2)

- Adult learners are assessed to see if they are PLAR eligible (upon registration and receipt of student records; 2)

- Upon registration, adult learners receive an email about PLAR and guidance counsellors seek out PLAR opportunities with adult learners

- Presentations are made to classes

- Information about PLAR is shared on social media and school advertisements

There were a variety of ways that PLAR was administered at different school boards (see Table 13). The most commonly used PLAR administration process was through guidance counsellors, which was the case at four school boards.

Table 13. PLAR administration among select school boards in Ontario

Different ways that PLAR is administrated in select school boards in Ontario
• Via guidance counsellors
• Through department heads at each school site
• Central administration through a PLAR school board lead
• Designated PLAR staff to support adult learners through the process
• Adult learners are registered in a PLAR course and their applications and submissions are reviewed by a PLAR assessor. If eligible, adult learners write PLAR assessment packages for junior credits and adult learners develop portfolio packages to earn senior credits.
• A designated instructor determines adult learners' readiness to write PLAR tests and supervises testing. Tests are marked by a teacher (under the supervision of the principal).
• PLAR services provided through continuing education
• PLAR is administered by teachers at each local site
• PLAR services are completed online and reviewed by staff
• PLAR is completed at a designated learning centre

When asked an open-response question about the impact that PLAR had on adult learners, administrators (N = 15) had powerful comments to share about its positive

influence (see Table 14). Administrators described how PLAR made graduation attainable in a reasonable amount of time, validated adult learners' life experiences, built their confidence, gave them hope of completing their high school diploma, and prepared them for success in employment or at the post-secondary level.

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

Enablers and barriers in adult and continuing education

Administrators were asked open response questions about enablers and barriers to access for adult learners (see Table 15). The three most frequent administrator responses (N = 15) to enablers of access were guidance (4), flexible programming (4), and multiple sites (3). The three most frequent administrator responses (N = 16) for barriers to access were lack of technology/connectivity (9), other time commitments/responsibilities (7), and lack of transportation (6).

Table 15. Enablers and Barriers to Access to A&CE for Adult Learners Identified by Administrators

Enablers of Access to A&CE	Barriers to Access of A&CE
• Guidance (4) • Flexible programming (4)	• Lack of technology/connectivity (9)

• Multiple sites (3) • Provision of technology (e.g., computers and wireless hubs; 2) • Childcare (2) • Training support funds/financial support (2) • Re-engagement services (2) • Partnerships with non-credit programs (e.g., LBS and ESL; 2) • School website (2) • Knowledgeable A&CE staff • Alliances with co-terminus boards • Word of mouth • Online registration • PLAR • 1-800 phone number • Eliminating transportation challenges • Daily contact with adult learners • Re-engagement services (2) • Promotion of equity programs • Main contact person for adult learners • Individual modifications as required • In-house marketing team for promotion • Developed a strong presence in the school board and community • Food provision	• Other time commitments/ responsibilities (7) • Lack of transportation (6) • Financial constraints/poverty (4) • Childcare (4) • Lack of digital literacy skills (3) • Lack of self-confidence (2) • Insufficient enrolment for certain courses (2) • Lack of mental health/addiction services (2) • In-person sites may not be accessible (2) • Lack of literacy/numeracy skills • Being unaware of available supports • Only one school site • Food scarcity • Lack of affordable housing • Past negative schooling experiences • Negative stigma of adult education • Insufficient language skills • Privacy concerns – not wanting work to know that they have not completed their OSSD • School website wording may be hard to understand

In addition, administrators were asked open-response questions to identify enablers and barriers to adult learner outcomes in A&CE (see Table 16). The three most frequent administrator responses (N = 15) to enablers of outcomes for adult learners were experienced and supportive staff (9), guidance staff (6), and community partnerships that provide support services (6). The three most frequent administrator responses (N = 16) for barriers to outcomes for adult learners were other time/ commitments/ responsibilities (9), lack of transportation (6), and lack of technology/connectivity (5).

Table 16. Enablers and Barriers to Outcomes for Adult Learners in A&CE Identified by Administrators

Enablers of Outcomes in A&CE	Barriers to Outcomes in A&CE
• Experienced and supportive staff (9) • Guidance staff (6) • Community partnerships that provide support services (6) • Re-engagement services (2) • Food programs (2) • Adult-centred learning programs (e.g., coop, school to work; 2) • One-on-one support (2) • Flexible programs (2) • School board recognition and support • Online registration • Provision of technology (e.g., computers and wireless hubs) • PLAR • Special services counsellors • 1-800 number • Daily contact with student • Multiple sites • Promotion of equity programs • Childcare (2) • Special education support (where possible) • Family supports • Partnerships with non-credit programs (e.g., LBS and ESL) • Range of programs • Financial support (e.g., Ontario Works) • College presentations	• Other time commitments/ responsibilities (9) • Lack of transportation (6) • Lack of technology/connectivity (5) • Childcare (4) • Lack of digital literacy skills (3) • Lack of mental health support/ addiction services (3) • Lack of access to sites because of physical distance (2) • Past negative schooling experiences (2) • Financial constraints/poverty (2) • Food scarcity (2) • Lack of affordable/stable housing (2) • Negative stigma of adult education (2) • Lack of self-confidence (2) • Challenges with health and wellness (2) • Insufficient enrolment for certain courses • Lack of literacy/numeracy skills • Unmet special education needs • Lack of trained guidance counsellors • Lack of funding for high quality programs • Lack of family support • Insufficient language skills • School website wording may be hard to understand

In an open response question, administrators (N = 15) communicated the following suggestions for removing barriers for adult learners:

- Provide financial supports (e.g., technology funds, financial assistance; 7)
- Make childcare accessible (6)
- Funding for guidance staff (4)
- Increase flexibility through more program options/environments (e.g., make night school available in rural areas, provide options for in-person learning; 3)

- Training for A&CE staff (2)
- Funding for mental health and addiction services on site (2)
- Funding for special education staff (2)
- Provide transportation funds (2)
- Offer more one-on-one support for adult learners
- Reduce stigma associated with adult education
- Funding supports for social workers
- Partner with community agencies to provide local programs/mobile programs
- Offer in-person programs at multiple sites across a region
- Offer study skills classes and strategies for success
- Provide technology training in advance of online courses
- Assign a "Student Support Mentor" staff member to every adult learner – regular check-ins and make supports known
- Comprehensive poverty reduction strategies
- Provision of wraparound services through community partners
- Develop curriculum content that is relevant to Indigenous adult learners and make classrooms safe and welcoming environments
- Provide additional parking on site

Best practices and innovations in adult and continuing education

Thirteen administrators who completed the survey indicated that they had participated in the Adult Education Strategy (AES) commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Education from 2016 to 2019. In open response questions, administrators reported learning about the following best practices and innovations from the AES:

- Developing partnerships within school boards and outside of school boards to support adult learners
- Using online marketing tools/social media to develop a community presence
- Improving the PLAR process for adult learners
- Promoting adult and continuing education effectively within your own school board and community

- Capacity/champions to improve A&CE programs

- Effective intake, assessment, and referral processes for adults

- Virtual classes in remote locations

- Partnering with community agencies (e.g., libraries and public health agencies) to offer adult education programs in harder to reach areas

- Guidance assessment practices

- Online registration

- Regular language circles to bring the community in

In a follow-up open response question about implementation of best practices and innovation in school boards, administrators reported employing the following to support adult learner achievement:

- Online marketing/website improvement to increase enrolment

- Online registration

- Hybrid learning

- Online synchronous courses

- Expanding A&CE classrooms in community agencies (e.g., libraries, public health offices)

- Increasing the digital footprint of A&CE programs

- Optimizing PLAR

- Adult-centred learning programs (e.g., co-op, dual credit, school to work)

- Mapping/bundling curriculum expectations across courses

- Partnering with employment agencies on their Skills Advanced Ontario Projects to meet staff shortages in certain sectors

- Improving the intake form to allow for input from staff prior to course determinations

- Regular school-based team meetings

- Technology for student pathway tracking

- Having adult learners meet with guidance counsellors to determine program fit

- Exploring options for credit recovery

- Offering pathway programs in needed employment areas

- Providing adult learners with technology and internet services

- Providing pathways into credit programs for adult learners in non-credit programs

- Movement towards a central intake process in the board

- Integrating education and career pathways via various programs

- Having a social worker on staff who was a graduate student

- Culturally relevant curriculum materials/land-based learning programs

Key Findings and Implications

The CESBA Adult and Continuing Education study examined how adult learners are supported in their learning and achievement through A&CE credit programs across Ontario. In total, 296 adult learners, 64 teachers, and 17 administrators from 18 school boards and one Indigenous post-secondary institution participated in the study. Participants' responses provided insights into A&CE programs in Ontario. Key findings and their implications are highlighted for each stakeholder group in table format (see Table 17).

Table 17. Key Findings and Implications of the CESBA A&CE Study

A&CE Stakeholder	Key Findings	Implications
Learners	• Over half of adult learners (51%) reported joining A&CE to complete their high school diploma • Adult learners' most frequent reported reasons for joining A&CE and staying committed to it centered on their goal for a better future (e.g., obtaining a high school diploma, pursuing post-secondary education, training for a new career, etc.) • The majority of A&CE adult learners were completing their program online (51%) and some were doing online correspondence (18%)	• 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; additional supports are needed to ensure success • Adult learners need the support of professionally trained guidance counsellors to develop effective career pathway plans and to set and monitor appropriate goals • While online learning and correspondence offer flexibility needed, these modes of delivery require built-in support structures to promote success

	• The way most adult learners find out about A&CE is through family and friends (31%) and online searches/research (26%) • A high percentage (80%) of adult learners reported the use of one or more learning supports, but the general use of learning supports by individual adult learners was low (guidance counselling – 43%, tutoring – 23%) • Less than half of adult learners reported the use of one or more holistic supports (49%), and the use of individual supports is low (mental health – 22%, childcare – 11%)	• 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 • Given the unique needs of adult learners, learning supports, like guidance counselling and special education staff, should be government-funded; adult learners need to have learning supports available to them • Holistic supports are an important enabler of adult learner success; school boards need to be given funding and direction to invest in making them available to adult learners
	• Adult learners reported wanting more teacher interaction and support, program flexibility (e.g., the option of face-to-face learning or online learning), and guidance counselling • Only 54% of adult learners knew what PLAR is; adult learners who engaged with PLAR indicated that it was a positive experience	• Teachers and guidance counsellors play an invaluable role in supporting adult learners; they require special training to do so; adult learners require flexible programs them with choice • PLAR is enabler of student achievement and success; school boards need to ensure that PLAR eligible adult learners to help them obtain their diploma in a time efficient manner
Teachers	• Teachers reported developing a wide variety of soft and hard skills in adult learners • Teachers identified supporting adult learners through extra learning support, regular check-ins/communication with adult learners, and a positive classroom environment • More modes of program delivery and flexible scheduling were identified by teachers (and administrators) as enablers of adult learner success • Provision of technology and technology training are required to	• A framework for skills needed by adult learners (e.g., study, essential, and employability skills) and how to develop them would be helpful for teachers • The role of teachers in A&CE is invaluable; ways to facilitate teacher interaction and support, especially in an online environment, should be examined and adopted • 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) • Online guidance services, beyond the pandemic, could allow increased flexibility for staff and support for adult learners • Funds for technology should be provided for adult learners and they should receive

	promote learner success	technology training prior to online or hybrid learning
	• Teachers identified a variety of holistic supports for promoting adult learner success	• Wrap around services are recommended in A&CE to remove barriers to participation through the provision of holistic supports (e.g., mental health, childcare, food, etc.)
	• Partnerships between non-credit (e.g., LBS and ESL) and credit pathways promoted adult learner success	• Partnerships between non-credit (e.g., LBS and ESL) and credit pathways should be strengthened and encouraged
	• Teachers identified resource sharing and professional development as important methods related to best practices and innovation	• A&CE teachers need opportunities to network with their colleagues to share best practices and develop innovations collaboratively
Administrators	• There was great variation reported by administrators in the percentage of adult learners who complete their A&CE programs	• 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
	• Administrators reported variation in the number of learning and holistic supports available in their respective school boards	• Adult learners should have access to comprehensive learning and holistic supports to foster their success; increased funding is required for this
	• Adult-centred learning programs help adults achieve their goals	• Greater investments should be made in adult-centred programs (e.g., dual-credit, co-op, and school to work programs)
	• There is a lot of variety in how school boards make adult learners aware of PLAR and administer PLAR	• School boards should consider improving and aligning their PLAR processes to make them more accessible to adult learners
	• Administrators reported similar enablers to adult learner success as teachers; one of these enablers is financial support	• Adult learners have complex lives and competing responsibilities; they would benefit from financial support while they complete their A&CE programs
	• As capacity is developed in A&CE staff, they will continue to share best practices and develop innovative solutions to challenges	• A&CE is an important field of education that requires funding to develop capacity in staff to strengthen adult learner achievement and outcomes

Recommendations

Based on key findings from this report, we make the following recommendations to improve the quality of adult and continuing education programs in Ontario:

1. Provide flexible program options for adult learners who live complex lives
2. Increase adult and continuing education funding to ensure quality programs and adequate staff
3. Allocate funding for learning supports (e.g., tutoring, guidance counselling, technology) and holistic supports (e.g., mental health, food, transportation) that are needed to promote learner success and program completion
4. Provide special education staff and trained guidance counsellors to support adult learner achievement and pathway planning
5. Optimize PLAR to help adult learners earn their high school diplomas efficiently
6. Establish and cultivate partnerships between non-credit and credit pathways to prepare adult learners for credit programs

Conclusion

Adult and continuing education programs in Ontario are meeting the needs of adult learners by helping them achieve the goal of a better future for themselves, their families, and their communities. Adults require flexible education programs because they lead complex lives with numerous responsibilities. While many school boards provide flexible program options (e.g., online learning, hybrid learning, in-person learning, programs available in local community agencies), some school boards have limited choices because of insufficient funding and resources. Increased A&CE funding could help strengthen existing programs and provide the opportunity to increase program flexibility in other school boards. Many adult learners return to school to complete their high school diploma, and they require learning and holistic supports to be successful. However, there is variability in the number of supports provided by each school board. Funding specifically designated for supports could ensure that all school boards are able to offer a full suite of learning and holistic supports. Examples of two crucial supports are special education staff and trained guidance counsellors. To

promote the health and well-being of adult learners, on-site mental health support staff (e.g., social workers, psychologists) and financial support for basic living expenses would be beneficial. PLAR should be optimized in school boards to help adult learners complete their high school diploma in a timely manner. In addition, the establishment and cultivation of partnerships between non-credit and credit pathways can help adult learners develop strong foundational skills to foster lifelong learning and success. The Adult Education Strategy from 2016 to 2019 was an important investment made by the Ontario Ministry of Education (MOE) that helped build capacity in the field of A&CE and raise the profile of its importance. We are hopeful that the MOE will continue to prioritize adult and continuing education through the allocation of appropriate resources and investments. Ultimately, we believe that acting on the recommendations of this report will strengthen the A&CE system in Ontario and increase positive outcomes for adult learners.

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