

Transitions and Literacy Service Planning

A Joint Project of QUILL Learning Network and
the Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network

2014

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Transitions and Literacy Service Planning

Introduction

Transitions are the topic of much conversation in the Literacy and Basic Skills Program, due primarily to the role that transitions play in moving adult learners along their individual learning, training and employment journeys.

Not surprisingly, as a result of their importance, transitions have been identified as a deliverable in numerous Literacy and Basic Skills projects – past, present and future. While it's positive that transitions are getting the attention they deserve, it's becoming increasingly apparent that the word transition means different things to different people. There are transitions that occur as adult learners move through the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum in the adult literacy program they attend. There are transitions that adult learners make as they move from one LBS program to another. There are transitions that adult learners make when they finish their LBS requirements and move on to other academic institutions, training facilities or employment. And there are transitions that adult learners make when they move from LBS programs to other community supports and services.

So, adult learners can transition within a program, but they can also transition or move between LBS programs, from an LBS program to community supports, or from an LBS program to other academic institutions, facilities or employment. In order to fully understand the ways in which adult learners can and need to transition in pursuit of their long-term goals, it is ideal not just for an practitioner or LBS program to understand the points at which adult learners transition, but also when they are, in fact, ready to transition. And it is also ideal for all LBS practitioners, support organizations, and referral partners in a community to have the same understanding of transition points and transition readiness. Only by having common understandings of transition points and transition readiness can the risk of adult learners being referred prematurely (when they're not yet ready) or inaccurately (to the wrong type of program or support) be mitigated.

This intersection between adult learners, timing, and community programs and supports is where Literacy Service Planning and its associated processes come in. It is this connection between transitions and Literacy Service Planning that prompted two regional literacy networks – QUILL Learning Network (QUILL) and the Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network (SMLN) – to submit projects to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) for consideration in the 2013/2014 Call for Proposals. Both projects were funded. While each of the network’s projects had a wide array of deliverables, both had deliverables related to tasks, transitions and Literacy Service Planning (or community planning).

Project overviews

Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network

We’ll begin with Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network’s (SMLN’s) project, which focuses on the transitions that are necessary between Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) and Employment Services (ES).

Transitions and Literacy Service Planning Need

In its project proposal, SMLN stated that:

“Discussions among local LBS and ES managers have identified several areas where they see a need and opportunity to work more closely and effectively together.

Some of these are:

- What can each service provider offer the client/learner and when is the best time in the service/learning plan of a client/learner to transition from one service to the other?
- How can we support that person to enhance their resilience as they move through that transition, in ways that are effective for both clients and service providers?
- How best can ES and LBS service providers work with clients/learners who access services concurrently?”

In addition, the SMLN project proposed to reach out to communities throughout the province via the regional literacy networks and organizations that support ES providers to research the ways in which ES and LBS programs have been working together to promote transitions from ES to LBS and from LBS to ES.

Transition and Literacy Service Planning Goal

The goal of these activities for SMLN was so that Regional Literacy Networks and LBS service providers could better document community work related to transitions to inform service planning and coordination, as service coordination is a significant function for Regional Literacy Networks.

QUILL Learning Network

QUILL's project is primarily about increasing literacy practitioners' capacity to create and level tasks within the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF). However, the ongoing population of the task-based portal (built and maintained by the QUILL Learning Network) is desirable and Literacy Service Planning (LSP) groups have been identified as a potential source of new tasks. As a result, QUILL's 2013/2014 funded project contained deliverables related to transitions and LSP.

Transitions and Literacy Service Planning Need

QUILL's project had the following objectives related to transitions and Literacy Service Planning:

“Facilitate seamless, effective learner transitions through: Continuous improvement of evidence-based learner transitions between MTCU's Employment Ontario programs (LBS, Apprenticeship, Employment Services); and Literacy Services Plans that reflect the input, objectives and priorities of Employment Ontario programs, such as Employment Services, Apprenticeship and Local Boards, and that are responsive to emerging community needs.

A secondary goal of this project is to link the creation of tasks to needs that are identified at the local level through literacy service planning – tasks that will

facilitate learner transitions through the EO system. Two regional literacy networks will be selected to pilot this process and to incorporate the results into next year's literacy service planning process and plan.”

Transitions and Literacy Service Planning Goal

As was mentioned earlier, QUILL's goal was to explore task development for transition points within the context of Literacy Service Planning (LSP) to produce two case studies that demonstrate how task development can be linked to local transitions and planning. Another goal of QUILL's project was to develop an additional 20 tasks for the task-based portal – tasks that would, instead of focusing on the demonstration of abilities related to the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework's (OALCF's) learning activities, milestones and culminating tasks, relate to community transition points that were identified at the local level.

Opportunity for QUILL and SMLN to Work Together

The two projects – QUILL's and SMLN's – noted that should both projects be funded, the two networks would work together on the LSP portions and jointly communicate their intended results and products to the field.

Before we explore the actual activities and results of the QUILL and SMLN projects on transitions and Literacy Service Planning, we'll look at two factors or conditions that promote successful transitions at the local level – a common understanding of what “transitions” means and practitioner expertise on task development related to transitions.

What Does It Take to Develop Tasks Related to Transitions and Literacy Service Planning?

A Well Understood Definition of Transitions

As was identified in the Introduction, the word “transitions” is widely used in many different contexts within the LBS Program. We talk about transitions within the levels of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) as well as transitions that

occur when an LBS learner moves from one LBS program to another LBS program (such as from a community-based, one-to-one program to a college, class-based program). We also talk about learners transitioning from LBS to another Employment Ontario Service, such as Employment Services or from Employment Services to LBS. LBS learners can also transition to goals beyond the Employment Ontario Network, such as Gr. 12, GED or post-secondary, or to other support services in the community that may assist them.

When talking about transitions and Literacy Service Planning, it's important not only that transitions be recognized on the many levels at which they occur, but that each community organization and its practitioners/employees agree with or recognize when transitions exist and what the requirements are to make those transitions for clients successful.

A finding during both SMLN's and QUILL's projects was that practitioners and community members understood the word "transitions" differently and saw transitions in different ways. In some cases, it was difficult for practitioners and community members to "see" transitions outside of their individual programs – which can pose challenges for community-wide discussions about transitions. It was also difficult to achieve a common understanding of transitions because of the significant amount of change that has transpired in the LBS field over the last two years. LBS practitioners have had to introduce many new terms, processes and initiatives into their programming and to understand how they fit together. For example, what is the relationship between information and referral protocols and discussions about transitions? How do transitions relate to common assessment? What is the relationship of transitions to milestones and culminating tasks?

As discussions within SMLN and QUILL's projects unfolded, it became clear that the lack of clarity around what transitions are and the many levels on which they occur, plus the potential confusion regarding how transitions relate to other large-scale MTCU expectations and initiatives, were impacting community discussions around transitions. To acknowledge this challenge, an activity was created to ground discussion around transitions. This activity will be detailed further in the "How Transitions Affect LBS" section of this report.

Practitioners Need the Skills to Identify Transitions and Develop Tasks

A project goal for both projects was to tie the identification of local transition points and the tasks developed to address them to Literacy Service Planning. However, evaluative data from QUILL’s project, which had as a major deliverable increasing practitioner capacity to develop tasks, suggests that practitioners may not yet have all the skills they need to competently create tasks and assign complexity levels. Another project that received funding in the 2013/2014 round of SDNDF – a project on developing tasks for the apprenticeship goal path – found similar results. In fact, a suggestion from the project on developing tasks for apprenticeship was that practitioners should ideally receive training, coaching and mentoring around Essential Skills and task development – in order to develop the skills they need to be competent around task development.



Because practitioners (in general) need more support/training in order to be prepared for a) their understanding of transition points, and b) their ability to develop tasks to address transition points, QUILL Learning Network decided not to ask local practitioners to identify and develop individual tasks, but chose a different method to address its project deliverable of developing 20 tasks for the task-based portal – tasks that would relate to community transition points that were identified at the local level. More details will be provided on this alternate approach in the section of this report entitled “QUILL Learning Network’s Project Activities.”

Project Activities to Connect Transitions to Literacy Service Planning

Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network's Project Activities

To recap, SMLN's 2013/2014 project goals related to transitions and Literacy Service Planning were to:

- research the ways in which Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) and Employment Services (ES) have been working together to promote transitions
- better document community work related to transitions into service planning and co-ordination
- make connections between EOIS-CaMS and transitions at the local level

Through field research, 5 face-to-face training sessions – in London, Sudbury, Toronto, Peterborough and Orillia – and through a provincial webinar, SMLN collected best practices related to transitions between Literacy and Basic Skills and Employment Services.

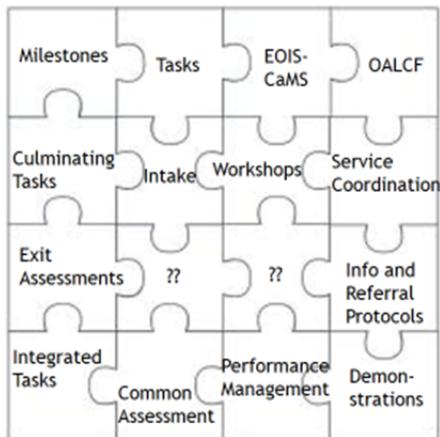
In addition, the SMLN project looked at three areas that will benefit other regional literacy networks as they work to identify local transitions and tasks to address them:

1. How transitions affect LBS
2. How task development can be linked to local transitions and service planning
3. EOIS-CaMS: transitions and data

How Transitions Affect LBS

As it became clear through community workshops that participants had different understandings of the word *transitions* and that the connection between transitions and other significant LBS initiatives was unclear, the Project Consultant for the SMLN project developed an activity which would address these two challenges.

The goal of the activity was to identify and acknowledge the significant changes that have affected and continue to affect LBS delivery, and to initiate discussion around how the different “pieces of delivery” connect not just to each other, but also how they can be combined to support learner/client transitions.



Activity:

1. Review the list of service delivery pieces
2. Work with your puzzle pieces to discuss/ discover how these pieces work together to support transitions for clients/learners

Activity:

1. Select 3 pieces that you think you are doing well in terms of how the piece supports transitions for clients/learners
2. Provide concrete examples of how these pieces are supporting transitions for clients/learners

Be prepared to report back to the large group

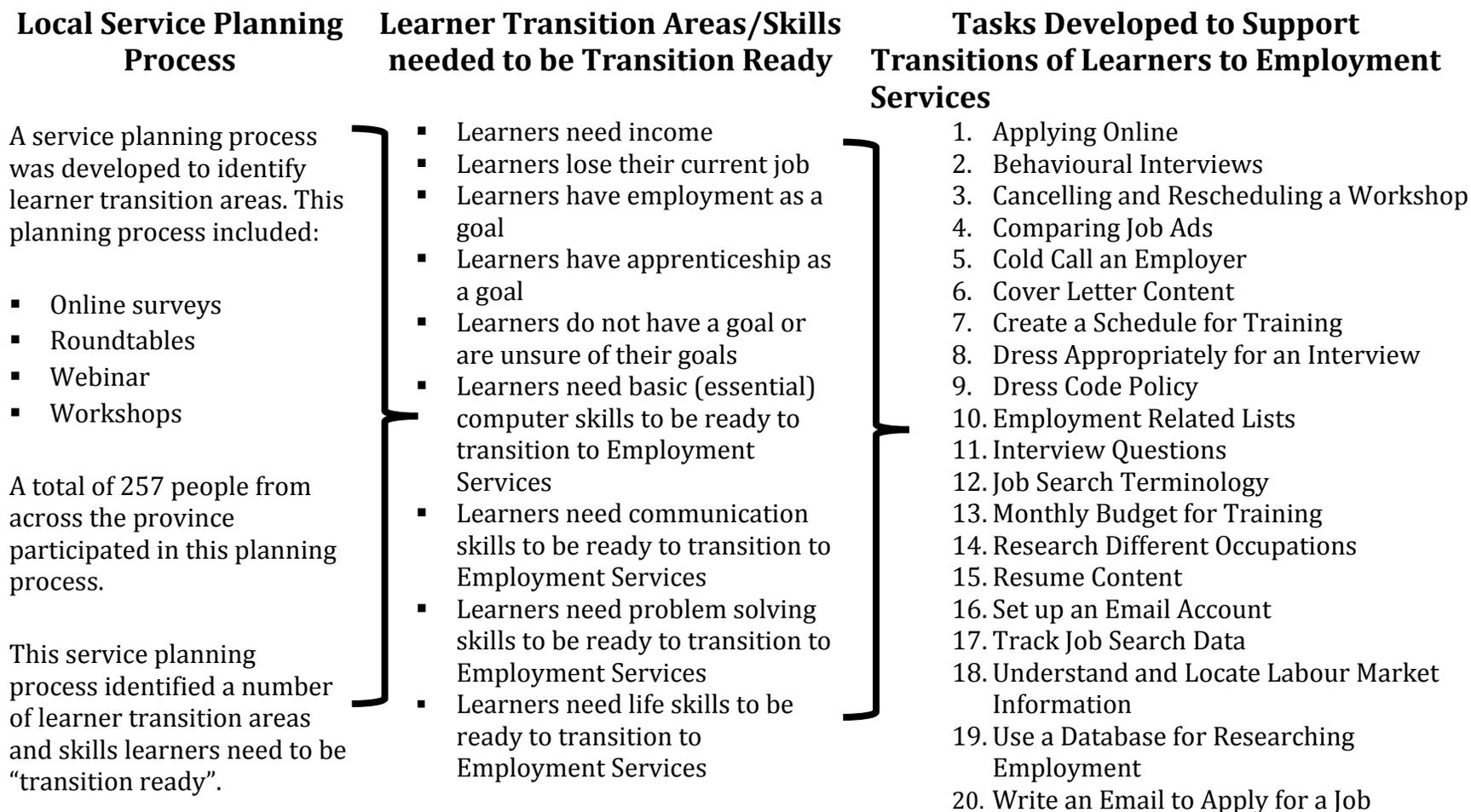
Activity:

1. Select 3 pieces where you think there is an opportunity to improve how you are doing in terms of how the piece supports transitions for clients/learners
2. Provide concrete ways in which this piece of the service delivery puzzle could be improved to support transitions for clients/learners

Be prepared to report back to the large group

How Task Development can be linked to Local Transitions and Service Planning

The chart below was developed by SMLN’s Project Consultant to assist LBS and ES providers in understanding the connection between Literacy Service Planning, client/learner transition-readiness and the development of tasks designed to support specific transitions. Note: the 20 tasks are the tasks that the QUILL Learning Network developed as part of its project.



EOIS-CaMS: Transitions and Data

The Project Consultant hired to do community consultation with ES and LBS partners developed a number of slides to assist LBS and ES practitioners in making the connection between data (EOIS-CaMS) and transitions:

EOIS-CaMS and Transitions

- Detailed Service Quality Reports
- Performance measurement report - tied to funding
- Shows performance commitments and actual results across three dimensions:

Service Quality Standards	ES	LBS
Customer Service	40%	33.3% to 40%
Effectiveness	50%	33.3% to 50%
Efficiency	10%	33.3% to 10%

Core Measure: Customer Service

LBS Phase One: 2012-2014 (33.3%)		LBS Phase Two: 2014-2016 (40%) and Current ES	
Measures	Weight	Measures	Weight
1. Customer Satisfaction	33.33%	1. Customer Satisfaction	15%
2. Service Coordination	0.0%	2. Service Coordination	25%

Service Coordination

- Based on closed service plans
- Three sources:
 1. Referred in (when a service plan is opened)
 2. Referral during service (as a service plan sub-goal)
 3. Referred at exit (as a service plan sub-goal)

Service Coordination Indicators

LBS Indicators

1. Referred in
2. Referred out - registered in Education
3. Referred out - registered in Training
4. Referred out - registered in ES
5. Referred out - registered or confirmed receiving services with community resources that support learning

ES Indicators

1. Referred in
2. Referred out - registered in Education/Training to complete high school or equivalent
3. Referred out - registered/participating in Training
4. Referred out - registered or confirmed receiving services with other community resources that support employability

Can select multiple referrals, only first one is counted

Quill Learning Network's Project Activities

In QUILL's 2013/2014 SDNDF project, QUILL committed to exploring:

- continuous improvement of evidence-based learner transitions between MTCU's programs (LBS, ES, and Apprenticeship)
- Literacy Service Plans that reflect the impact, objectives and priorities of Employment Ontario (EO) programs
- the link between tasks and needs identified local through Literacy Service Planning, and piloting within two networks
- the creation of 20 tasks for use on the task-based portal – tasks that reflect local needs

As was stated earlier, it became evident about halfway through this project that even after participating in a 3-part webinar, not all practitioners are going to have the skills, knowledge and experience they need to develop tasks that reflect local transition points. In addition, the concept of what constitutes local transition points is open for debate, given the many levels within EO that transitions can and should occur on and given the large amount of change management that LBS programs have been navigating through.

As a result of the above realities, QUILL decided that it was premature to attempt the identification and development of local transition points and tasks via Literacy Service Planning. Instead, QUILL hired a consultant to determine community needs related to EO transitions. The consultant:

- reviewed a report on Transitions that was developed through Literacy Link South Central in December 2013. This report detailed conversations, projects and products that all had transitions as a theme.
- interviewed Employment Service Providers in three regional networking areas (QUILL, Literacy Link South Central and Literacy Ontario Central South). Employment Service providers were asked to identify tasks that would support LBS learners in transitioning to employment services.

- shared the results of the Transitions Report and the interviews with Employment Service Providers with a Task Development Expert.

The Task Development Expert created the following 20 tasks for QUILL. These tasks will be put on the task-based learning portal.

Tasks Developed to Support Transitions of Learners to Employment Services

1. Applying Online
2. Behavioural Interviews
3. Cancelling and Rescheduling a Workshop
4. Comparing Job Ads
5. Cold Call an Employer
6. Cover Letter Content
7. Create a Schedule for Training
8. Dress Appropriately for an Interview
9. Dress Code Policy
10. Employment Related Lists
11. Interview Questions
12. Job Search Terminology
13. Monthly Budget for Training
14. Research Different Occupations
15. Resume Content
16. Set up an Email Account
17. Track Job Search Data
18. Understand and Locate Labour Market Information
19. Use a Database for Researching Employment
20. Write an Email to Apply for a Job

Evaluation of Tools

As both QUILL's and SMLN's projects have components related to Literacy Service Planning and since Literacy Service Planning is one of the primary functions paid for by MTCU, project management decided to consult with regional literacy networks as to networks' perceived role in identifying tasks and transition points at the local level.

Process

The results of the **Transitions Report – December 2013** and this summary of QUILL and SMLN's activities to explore the identification of transition points at the local level will be sent to the regional literacy networks in June 2014, along with a survey (which will be distributed through SurveyMonkey).

Tool

Once the Regional Literacy Network staff have had the opportunity to review the Literacy Service Planning and Transitions package sent to them in June, which showcases project results from QUILL Learning Network and Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network, they will be asked to participate in a focus group on Transitions and Literacy Service Planning at the next Learning Networks of Ontario meeting (date yet to be determined). The questions on the next page will guide the focus group. A goal of the focus group will be to encourage the Regional Literacy Networks to explore what role they can play in facilitating the creation of additional tasks – tasks that reflect local needs and transition points – for the Portal.

1. Do you believe that the regional networks have a role to play in assisting EO programs to identify local transition points?

Yes

No

Unsure

Comments:

2. Do you believe that the regional networks have a role to play in developing tasks to assist LBS clients in moving successfully across local transition points?

Yes No Unsure

Comments:

3. What benefits, if any, can you see from this practice of networks identifying local transition points and assisting in the development of tasks that will facilitate transitions at the local level?

4. What challenges?

5. To what extent, on a scale of 1 - 4, with 1 being not at all and 4 being to a great extent, do you believe this LSP transition package

- have reaffirmed why discussions about transitions in general can be challenging
- showcased two case studies, which demonstrate how tasks can be identified and developed through Literacy Service Planning to address local transition points
- will assist your network in investigating how the transitioning of clients between ES and LBS can be effectively documented and integrated into current Literacy Service Planning processes and products
- demonstrated how task development can be linked to local transitions and planning
- will assist your network in identifying local tasks that need to be developed to support local transitions

Comments

6. Do you think that your network (staff) have the necessary background, experience and skills to guide one or more of your Literacy Service Planning groups to produce one task annually for the portal?

Yes No Unsure

Comments:

7. Do you have any other comments you'd like to share about this Transitions and Literacy Service Planning package?

Summary

The identification of transition points and tasks that would demonstrate readiness to transition at the local level is a complex concept. A community needs to have the requisite skills and knowledge to undertake such an activity. Both QUILL Learning Network and the Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network committed to working together to investigate how regional literacy networks could tie the identification of local transition points and related tasks to Literacy Service Planning.

QUILL and SMLN's experiences this past year demonstrate that identifying local transition points and developing tasks to show transition readiness (and tying such activities to Literacy Service Planning) are not activities that can be neatly attributed to time-limited projects. Literacy Service Planning is an ongoing activity, coordinated by regional literacy networks, and, as such, is organic and highly subject to MTCU's initiatives and directives. In other words, project plans that require time and energy at the Literacy Service Planning table often must make way for other initiatives and work that cannot be anticipated. For example, many LSPC committees are spending considerable time looking at EOIS-CaMS and assisting local programs with understanding the reports that can be produced by EOIS-CaMS, as well as the impacts of such reports on customer service, efficiency and effectiveness. They are also paying great attention to data integrity as a result of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF). While local transition points are

important and are not entirely divorced from the aforementioned topics, they are of less importance to programs at the present time.

In terms of transitions as a whole, programs are most concerned at the moment with transitions between Employment Services and LBS. To this end, the SMLN project has produced best practices which are very timely. The QUILL Learning Network, through its 20 tasks that were developed to support transitions of learners to employment services, has also assisted LBS programs.

The need to assist LBS learners in making successful transitions at all levels will continue to be important for LBS programs and for LBS support organizations. However, there is a continued need for training for all parties and for information related to government initiatives such as Employment Training Services Integration (ETSI), which will increase the importance of successful transitions and community planning.