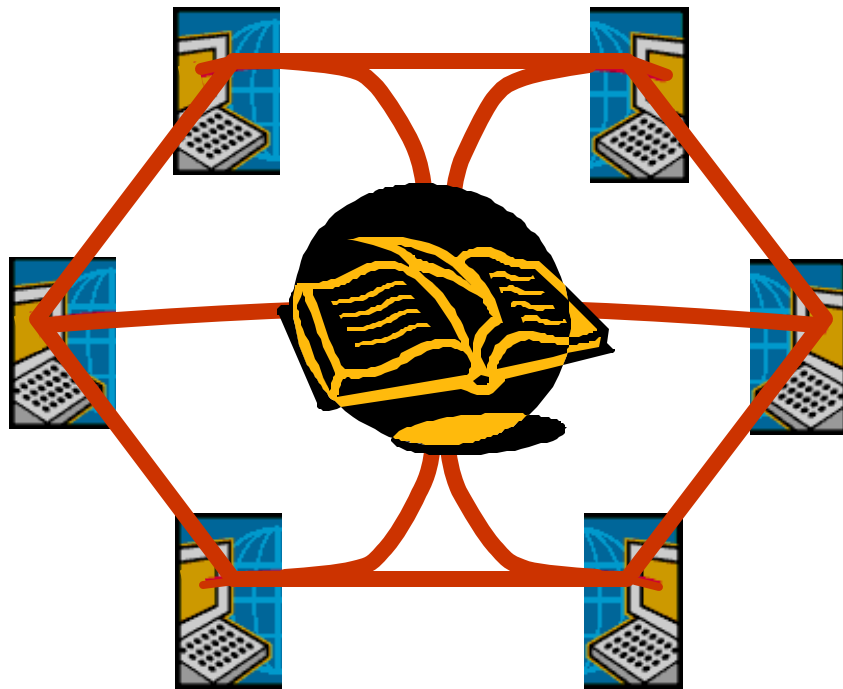


Reaching the People Who Need It Most



e-PD Reading and Response Pilot Summary Report

**Prepared by: Goforth Consulting
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The *e-PD Reading and Response Pilot* proved to be a very demanding endeavour for all individuals concerned. It demanded commitment, active participation, risk-taking and patience. Most of all it demanded time – time to read a lengthy document, time to read daily e-messages, time to process information, time to respond to messages and time to evaluate the pilot as a whole. For the LBS college practitioners taking part in the pilot, this involvement was on top of an already pressing workload. For many, it meant working late into the evenings or on weekends.

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Researcher/Writer: Dee Goforth

Background

The *e-PD Reading and Response Pilot* is part of a larger College Sector Committee (CSC) project called *Reaching the People Who Need It Most*. The aim of the overall project is to identify more clearly the professional development (PD) needs of Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) college practitioners, and bring practitioners together to engage in relevant and meaningful PD activities.

During the past two years, the CSC supported PD for practitioners primarily through regional training events. PD was delivered through workshops on identified topics. The training events also provided practitioners with an opportunity to get together in subject group meetings to discuss educational and procedural issues, compare classroom experiences and share educational resources.

While these events were very successful, feedback from the events identified two important PD issues:

- 1) that many practitioners are unaware of new resources developed by the literacy field at large – including resources developed by the CSC itself
- 2) that practitioners who are aware of new resources often do not have time to read them

The first issue was partly resolved with the launch of the CSC website in early December 2003. All LBS college practitioners can now access this website to read project reports and relevant publications. The site also links practitioners to Ontario colleges, regional networks and other literacy organizations.

Since accessing resources was no longer a key focus, the project was able to concentrate on the second issue practitioners raised – not having time to read. While this may be true, we do know that many practitioners engage in self-study. Although the sample was small, results from the 2003 Central Region Training Survey showed that 61% of the practitioners who responded to the survey had engaged in some type of self-study in the previous year. This was encouraging! What else then might induce busy practitioners to read a new literacy resource or publication? The same 2003 Central Region Training Survey also showed that meeting colleagues from other colleges and sharing information with them was the main reason practitioners cited for attending the CSC regional training event. Based on this feedback, as well as feedback from other regional training events, it was decided that a pilot be undertaken to investigate ways to bring practitioners together for a focused reading and discussion activity.

Research

In developing the pilot, a number of different PD models were researched. One article, **Adapting ABE Professional Development to the Internet** by Jane Martel, provided the impetus to consider online professional development or 'e-PD'. In 2001, the Kentucky Department for Adult Education and Literacy piloted a 'blended' PD course – online learning followed up by a face-to-face meeting. One of the attractive features of e-PD for the Department was its flexibility. Online courses could be started at any time of the year and offered day or night; teachers did not have to wait for scheduled face-to-face sessions. Because of this, peer relationships across the state could be easily and quickly developed. Another attractive feature was that participants' incoming level of knowledge could be raised in a more uniform way. Participants would complete work in advance to be prepared for the face-to-face meeting. This meant that materials and assignments had to be provided to participants well in advance too.

While funding didn't allow for bringing participants together face-to-face for this phase of the project, it was decided that the CSC would investigate the potential of e-PD. If proven effective, this method (using AlphaCom) could provide an alternate and relatively inexpensive means of providing PD to LBS college practitioners across the province. The pilot would benefit from the lessons learned by the Kentucky experience although the pilots were in many ways quite different.

Another article that influenced the approach and structure of the pilot was, **Does Adult Educator Professional Development Make a Difference?** by Sandra Kerka. This paper says that the field of adult education in the United States seems to be moving away from discrete training events that simply provide information and knowledge to "practitioner engagement in sustained knowledge construction and collaboration involving professionally meaningful questions." [1] Examples include practitioner inquiry and action research. The article also identifies key elements that positively influence these kinds of approaches to professional development. They include:

- Voluntary participation
- An extended time scale
- Small group size
- Embeddedness in issues that are professionally meaningful

In developing the *e-PD Reading and Response Pilot*, the consultant attempted to incorporate these elements along with a number of specific suggestions from the Kentucky experience.

Developing the Pilot

This section briefly describes:

- (1) how the key elements were incorporated into the structure of pilot
- (2) how other important features were built into the pilot

Voluntary participation, time scale and group size

An e-memo was sent out to all colleges inviting the participation of practitioners (minimum of 3 per college) in the pilot and determining the best time slot for it. The rationale was that the small group at each college would provide an additional forum for sharing ideas and act as a means of support for one another. The first 8 colleges to respond would be selected to participate. See **Appendix 1** for the Memo.

Practitioners' responsibilities identified in the memo included:

- 1) reading an eighty-page document on issues related to classroom management and student retention during a one-week timeframe (with guiding questions)
- 2) participating in a subsequent two-week long electronic discussion group on AlphaCom, and
- 3) completing an evaluation of the pilot by means of a short survey

The pilot was designed to be process-oriented rather than product-oriented, although it was understood that participants would ultimately decide this question. The intention of the pilot was to focus on practitioner participation and discover the strengths and weaknesses of e-PD using AlphaCom.

Professionally meaningful issues

The document chosen for discussion was **Classroom Dynamics in Adult Literacy Education**, by Hal Beder and Patsy Medina of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (Harvard University Graduate School of Education). It provides a detailed and comprehensive description of classroom dynamics in adult literacy programs in the United States. It was identified as a must-read for practitioners by the CSC student commitment project (2003) as the only study since 1975 to address issues related to classroom behaviours and classroom management.

The study takes the reader into 20 adult literacy classrooms and shows them how instruction is structured and delivered in these classrooms. It also links classroom management to student retention which is an issue of ongoing concern to LBS college

programs. Finally, it highlights three critical issues for the programs involved in the study – issues that similarly affect LBS college programs.

They are:

- 1) continuous student intake
- 2) large, multi-level classrooms, and
- 3) funding pressures

For these reasons, it was felt that the study was ‘professionally relevant’ to LBS college practitioners. The study was also chosen for a very practical reason. Dr. Beder agreed that the CSC could make a limited number of copies. One of the challenges of e-learning is to ensure that all participants have easy access to printed materials and that they receive their materials on time.

The Response

Nineteen participants from 9 colleges agreed by e-mail to participate in the pilot. The College Sector Committee also extended an invitation to the Acting Co-Executive of the Ontario Literacy Coalition. Each participant was sent an information package which included:

- A description of the project
- An explanation of the participant’s role
- A brief rationale for the choice of topic
- Instructions for reading the report
- Instructions for registering with AlphaCom
- Instructions for logging on to the discussion group
- Instructions for adding messages to the discussion (added after the pilot)

See **Appendix 2** for the Information Package.

Evaluation of the Pilot

An evaluation survey was also included in the package although participants were instructed that an e-version would be forwarded on the final day of the discussion. See **Appendix 3** for a copy of the Evaluation Survey. Participants were instructed to use the paper survey only if they had difficulty completing the e-survey. The survey asked participants to comment on the potential of e-PD using AlphaCom. It was designed to elicit feedback on key factors that might influence participants’ feelings about e-PD. Some of these factors were: use of technology, time frame, facilitation, interest in the topic and relevance of the study. The data from the survey would be analyzed to discover correlations between these factors and practitioners’ opinions about the potential use of e-PD. It would also be used to determine the overall success of the pilot.

Facilitation of the Discussion

The discussion was moderated by two facilitators – Dee Goforth, the consultant leading the pilot, and Bob Smith, an LBS college practitioner at Sir Sandford Fleming. It was anticipated that Bob’s expertise as a facilitator would greatly enhance the discussion while his experience as a practitioner would keep the discussion grounded. Co-facilitation also meant that if one of the facilitators became ill or experienced technology problems, the other would be able to assume full facilitating responsibilities.

Contact with Participants

The consultant contacted the participants by e-mail twice before the actual discussion began. The first contact was to:

- announce the time slot
- announce that participants would be receiving their information package
- check that the e-mail list was complete and accurate

See **Appendix 4** for the Contact Letter.

The second time was to post a message at the beginning of Week 1 reminding participants to read the study in preparation for the discussion and asking participants to introduce themselves.

In their introductions participants were asked to include information about:

- their college setting (whether main or satellite campus, location, other unique features)
- their program (enrolment size, particular focus, continuous or block intake)
- the content/delivery (subject area(s), content structure such as set or flexible curriculum or both, method of instruction, such as individualized or group or both)
- their classroom setting/environment (permanent or shared classroom, average class size, physical arrangement of desks or tables)

Most of the participants posted their introductions on the first day of the discussion. The introductions, on the whole, were quite comprehensive; participants offered several examples of approaches their programs currently use to provide greater opportunities for student interaction and group instruction.

The Structure of Discussion

Participants were asked up front how they wanted the discussion structured. For example, they could begin the discussion by addressing specific questions put forward in the Information Package, or they could respond to the overall question: What are we currently doing in our programs and classrooms to build community among our students and minimize the impact of continuous enrolment and large, mixed classes?

I would prefer to go chapter by chapter so I know what section of ideas I have to think about each day. Some chapters are more engaging and may require more discussion than others.

There was support for working through the report chapter by chapter. For the most part the questions posed for each chapter were used to guide the discussion.

Target for Discussion

While there was no official target set for participation, it was hoped that each participant would post a minimum of two messages in addition to their introductions. While this might seem like a modest target, we knew that the time slot was not the preferred one for all participants, and that others new to AlphaCom might encounter some technical difficulties.

Briefly then, while careful thought was given to the development of the pilot, we knew we would have some lessons of our own to learn. **Appendix 5** contains a checklist of elements that worked well along with some new elements identified through the evaluation of the pilot. The list is a work in progress, but can serve as a starting point for any practitioner interested in initiating or leading an e-PD activity.

Summary of Discussion

Nineteen practitioners from 9 colleges initially agreed to take part in the pilot. Two were not able to participate because of unexpected workloads and/or technical problems, “I am having a difficult time this term, and I haven't completed the reading yet.” Workload was an issue for participating practitioners as well, “Although I wanted to participate further, the workload at the college became overwhelming. I thought at the time of registration that the time frame was perfect. I wish I had more free-time to participate.”

Of the 17 practitioners who took part in the pilot, 2 were sole participants, i.e., they were the only ones from their college to take part. One of them however shared information from the discussion with two program colleagues and compiled a report concluding with observations about issues she felt should be addressed by her department, “I have yet to go through all the discussions to identify all the points that resonated the most. I will do that as the discussion was most valuable not only to suggest other ways of doing things but also for confirming that our concerns and procedures are shared by other colleges.”

Programs varied demographically. Two programs had mainly female students; two others had mainly younger students. Most programs operated on a continuous intake basis – either weekly or monthly. One program used both continuous and block intake. The main delivery method was through individualized instruction which responds to students’ needs for flexible schedules and continuous entry to the program. Individualized instruction accommodates larger classes with mixed LBS levels. Programs described themselves as “self-paced, one-to-one learning, self-study with a lot of support, and independent study.”

Most, if not all participants, clearly recognized the need for student interaction and group instruction, and used various means to incorporate more of it into their programs and teaching.

Some of these included:

- establishing programs (within LBS) that have a clear focus such as an employment readiness program and a Worker Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) program
- offering program orientation
- using a variety of workshops to deliver parts of the program, e.g., speaking and listening
- encouraging interaction through attendance at presentations given by other students
- setting up structured classes for particular subject areas

- providing course delivery that is half individualized and half stand up-teaching
- building in class time where all students are working on the same assignments
- taking a small group of students out of the classroom and working with that group separately
- scheduling regular monthly classroom meetings
- scheduling information/open forum meetings throughout the year
- providing “Town Hall” meetings for students to meet as a large group

Although only 17 participants (from 8 colleges) ultimately took part in the pilot, the amount of participation exceeded expectations.

In total, 117 messages were posted during the two weeks the discussion was active. The discussion comprised nearly 70 pages of single-spaced script. Of the 117 messages, more than two thirds or 79 messages were posted by participants. Several participants commented that they found the discussion interesting and enjoyable.

It is very interesting and enlightening to read all of the responses. It's really too bad that we don't get more opportunity to do this with our college sector colleagues, whether virtually or in person.

Although there was ample discussion, participation was uneven. Some participants posted as many as 8 or 9 messages while others posted only 1 or 2. The average number of postings per participant was 4.6.

As mentioned in the previous section, the questions posed for each chapter of the report were used to guide the discussion. Following are brief summaries of the three chapters that were discussed. They have been included for two purposes:

- 1) to provide context for understanding the evaluation results of the pilot, and
- 2) to highlight some of the challenges and the achievements of practitioners who deliver mostly individualized forms of instruction

The summaries alone were not able to capture the scope or flavour of the discussion. Excerpts from participants’ conversations and exchanges therefore are used liberally throughout this section of the report.

Chapter 3: The Classroom Setting

This chapter reported that most of the teachers observed in the classroom dynamics study tried to create a classroom atmosphere for their learners that was comfortable – both emotionally and physically. For the most part, the researchers described the classrooms they observed as pleasant.

Questions posed to pilot participants: Do you think the physical setting is important to learners? How do you know? What are some of the challenges in creating a comfortable and safe classroom environment?

Summary of chapter discussion:

This section will begin with an anecdote provided by one of the participants:

Reading this chapter brought to mind a retired Algonquin teacher with whom I used to share an office. Bill liked teaching math, but he liked gardening too! He would bring a large jar with bouquets of beautiful flowers (the peonies were outstanding!) as they were in bloom from his garden. He would carry this, back and forth daily, between his office and his class, along with his books. It's amazing how a jar of flowers on a desk can warm a room! No one needed to tell Bill's students that he liked his job. He was usually a bit early, stayed a bit late, and shared pretty flowers from his garden with his students.

The participants considered the physical space of the classroom to be of critical importance to learners and to learning. In general they felt it should be welcoming, comfortable, warm, cheerful and pleasant. A classroom like this can make “students look forward to making their way to school and to being at school.” It can also “reduce the resistance” of those students who are pressured by sponsors or those who have had previous negative experiences with the education system.

I think that creating a welcoming setting is probably the most important part of our job.

Participants felt that the classroom should reflect the adult learner's needs and age. Some of the elements mentioned that make the classroom attractive, inviting and effective include: ample space, flexible seating arrangements, computers, plants, art work, inspirational posters, students' projects, bulletin boards and displays of relevant information such as schedules of the testing centre, learning materials and flyers for post-secondary programs.

Lack of space, uncomfortable chairs, and the lack of windows were seen as detractors to creating a positive physical space, but also as challenges to be overcome, “The challenge then becomes to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.” The topics of windows in the classroom came up repeatedly. Natural light was seen to be particularly important to learners with mental health issues, “Dark, confining, uncomfortable

If they (the learners) feel comfortable they are more receptive to new ideas and can concentrate on their learning.

classrooms affect their performance in class.” The importance of light was seen to be important for the well being of practitioners too.

Uncomfortable (extreme) room temperatures were seen to have a highly negative impact on learning, “This affects what they (the students) do in class. Their comfort level, as well as mine, is interrupting their learning.”

Signage was an issue for several programs. Although all the programs are, technically speaking, Literacy and Basic Skills programs, most have adopted an in-house name that they felt helped their learners ‘blend in’ with the general student population and “experience the prestige of being a college student as opposed to being an upgrading program.” One program that uses the name Literacy and Basic Skills as its program title, on the other hand, has had no issue with it.

The location of the classroom generated some interesting discussion. For those practitioners who felt their programs were more integrated with post secondary programs, location was considered closely linked to program success. For others, this was not the case – location served to isolate the program and accentuate differences.

Locating our rooms within the main campus building of our college has been a plus and learners have expressed a feeling of being valued. They have easy access to all college supports and student union activities.

One practitioner was interested in how others tried to build a trusting or safe classroom environment, and what some physical indicators of that might look like. Anecdotal evidence was considered to be a good indicator, e.g., learners reporting that their classroom makes them feel comfortable and at home. Another practitioner relied on observation, “Generally we know the learners' opinions of the setting by their complaints or actions.” Reporting through formal evaluation was a third indicator.

While practitioners acknowledged the importance of the physical environment, they pointed out that the emotional and intellectual environments they created were much more important to their students than the physical ones, “I agree that the setting needs to be warm and trusting, and that anything we can do to enrich the environment will help. Some of this will be achieved through the physical environment, while some will be in a more abstract sense created through the climate of the class.”

We want a class that looks welcoming, but also one that ‘is’ welcoming.

Practitioners employed several means, based on the principles of adult education, to create a positive, trusting, respectful, emotionally comfortable learning atmosphere for their students. Some of these are:

- demonstrating a positive attitude to students
- offering encouragement to students

- encouraging new students to contribute to the setting and to welcome newcomers to class
- connecting with students in a respectful, warm and compassionate manner
- reviewing classroom policies with new students to ensure awareness of the expectations of the class and to emphasize respect for other students
- encouraging relationships among students, e.g., asking students to act as tour guides to new students, asking students to help each other with computer problems and arranging “study buddies”
- helping students accept change
- providing support and showing students they are not alone
- acknowledging students’ struggle, listening to their problems, giving examples of previous students’ successes, providing hope, praising achievement and providing timely information
- using group activities and workshops to encourage interaction among students, e.g., having regular class meetings to discuss program issues and issues affecting students, pairing students for orientation and asking students to attend oral presentations as audience to support other learners

Chapter 4: The Content and Structure of Instruction

PART A

This chapter included a section on individualized instruction. Of the classes observed in the study, only one used a completely individualized approach. The report noted that most of the programs that used individualized instruction did so in response to mixed skill levels of learners and continuous enrolment. Two major challenges were associated with individualized instruction.

They are:

- 1) providing help to students when they need it
- 2) correcting students’ work in a timely manner

When I read Chapter 4, I was thinking it could be a biography from our class. Many of the challenges they discussed are things that we experience on a day-to-day basis.

Questions posed to pilot participants:

Are these key challenges for LBS college classrooms? If so, what approaches can programs use to respond to these challenges? How might they be different from approaches tried before?

Summary of chapter discussion:

Getting to students when they need help in class was articulated as a challenge by most if not all participants who responded to this question, “There can be times when students express that they feel that they are waiting too long for help or to have their work evaluated. This can lead to feelings of frustration, anger, and thoughts of dropping out of the course.”

Participants provided many examples of how help is given in a timely manner to students in the classroom. They include:

- observing students and trying to gauge when they get frustrated and acknowledging them to let them know they will get help as soon as possible
- asking another student (that the student who needs help is comfortable with) to provide assistance
- setting up a buddy/tutor system so students can help each other
- getting in supply teachers or tutors to help out during times of peak enrolment or with particular areas of study, e.g., oral communication
- using answer keys where appropriate so that learners can monitor their own work
- encouraging learners to proofread and edit each other's work
- building in some guidelines for self-assessment, e.g., if students get 3 or more mistakes or don't understand the correct answer, they must consult with the teacher
- using a triage-style strategy, e.g., the student with the least time-consuming needs is attended to first and so on
- making oneself available for after class tutoring
- grouping students by room (where a number of rooms are available) – the main classroom is where the teacher's desk is so that newer students can get quick access
- circulating throughout the classroom(s) to alleviate queues
- asking students to take on more responsibility for marking
- making efforts to be super organized
- having plenty of materials and handouts for students
- putting a 'Help' list on the board to give students fair access and priority
- freeing up the teacher's time by using technology (in a limited way) to support the curriculum

- providing better class coverage by having more than one teacher in a learning area
- offering to help students over the phone outside of class time

Correcting students' work in a timely manner is something programs really struggle with. How 'timely' assignments are marked is very dependent on class size and teacher/student ratio. It was suggested by one practitioner that the teacher/student ratio be kept manageable and be tied to the levels and subjects taught. The yearly cycle of enrolment was also noted as an issue that affected ratio, "We are often stuck with big classes at different times of the year either because of demand or simply because we have to try to meet contact hours."

I think that the challenge of giving timely help is one aspect of teaching in an individualized program that is highly underestimated by outside teachers and administrators.

Where an answer key is available or the assignment is short, the assignment is usually marked that day or is returned the following day. In cases where the instructor needs to evaluate an assignment, it can sometimes take a week to return it. One program has a five-working day return policy although it doesn't usually take that long to return marked assignments. Other programs manage to get assignments back the same or next day, although one participant mentioned that this is becoming increasingly difficult.

The students are very understanding when some of the marking is still waiting the next day as they are well aware that time spent during the previous day may have been used to help one of their fellow students.

A number of other issues and topics were raised in the discussion:

- 1) The need for good self-monitoring skills: Students who do not have good self-monitoring skills do not recognize they are performing poorly. This can result in students covering large sections of assignments with disastrous results.
- 2) The value of group work activities: Students in a novel study group felt the class was much more interesting and there was a significant improvement in attendance. Another group project, where students produced a small newsletter for their fellow learners and were responsible for all aspects of the project, was considered very successful.
- 3) The transference of skills: One program discovered that learners weren't transferring what they were learning about their grammar to their writing. It has responded with a cross curriculum approach. In another class students write their own sentences and paragraphs on weekly/bi-weekly basis. This shows the practitioner whether students' knowledge of grammar is being transferred or applied to writing.

- 4) The discrete skills approach VS the ‘making meaning’ approach: Making meaning instruction is more process orientated and involves a focus on problem-solving and critical thinking. Two observations were made by participants on this topic. One was that the authors of the paper seemed to suggest that one approach was better than the other; the other was that adult literacy instruction is generally oriented toward a discrete skills approach.
- 5) The need for quality curriculum: Practitioners were emphatic about the need for a solid, well-organized curriculum for their students – one that is adaptable and one that can build in “contextualized, process-based content.” The roadblock is that practitioners have little or no time to do curriculum development themselves and no funds are available to replace them to do the development. Necessary resources within easy reach in the classroom were also mentioned as essential in helping practitioners work more efficiently with students.

PART B

Chapter 4 also asked what kind of instruction was best for adult learners. In the 20 classes observed in the study, instruction was mainly orientated to discrete skill development. The authors questioned if this kind of instruction is adequate in preparing learners for success in further education/training or in the workplace. Only 4 of the classes fell into the category called ‘making meaning’ instruction. Making meaning instruction has a number of characteristics including a focus on:

- problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity and social awareness
- level authority relationships between teachers and learners
- emphasis on process over structure
- a high level of learner engagement

Questions posed to pilot participants:

Is it important to focus on problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity and social awareness in the LBS classroom? If so, how can this be done when the form of instruction is to a large extent individualized?

Summary of chapter discussion:

Participants clearly recognized the value of group dynamics and learner collaboration in the classroom. “They (the learners) all benefit from group interaction.” Following is an example provided by a participant which serves as a good example of the making meaning approach.

Another time a student was complaining that his apartment was too cold. The students had many suggestions about what to do and which authorities to complain to. It turns out the landlord had been brought to task to no avail. The next step was to contact a church which would take up his case.

There was follow up by the class and the church was handling things for him. My class is a very caring one – they help each other and I also help.

Several participants felt that skills requiring greater collaboration among learners could be addressed only to a limited extent in an individualized program, “We get at some of these skills, but not in any way that consistently engages the learner and develops these skills,” or “We have only been able to include them in a meaningful way in a few places in our programming.”

Participants use a number of specific tools, approaches and resources to help students develop skills like critical thinking and problem-solving. These are described below:

- 1) A Self-Awareness/Self-Direction skills inventory is completed by students in one class. “It is interesting and insightful to note how learners perceive themselves when completing this (inventory).” The results of the inventory ultimately dictate the content of the course.
- 2) CoRT Thinking (which stands for Cognitive Research Trust) is used to teach critical thinking skills in a logical but ‘fun’ way. “It uses group work, and the examples are real life. It can be used successfully with adult learners and touches on many social issues to boot!”
- 3) Particular academic assignments help students apply critical thinking skills. “In communications, for example, there is a section on persuasive writing, which includes identifying an issue, taking a stand on it and thinking through issues of audience and potential objections they might have to that position.”
- 4) Project-based learning (gardening and health projects) was used in one program. It was seen to be more successful in getting “learners to pursue their learning with more critical thinking and personal involvement than the regular reading and writing assignments.”
- 5) Weekly class meetings provide one very individualized class with an opportunity to focus on critical thinking and social awareness. “We make the meetings about more than just announcements. The topics range widely and we encourage those ‘non-school’ tangents, since we know students are practicing other things that are important, even if they think they’re distracting us and avoiding math and communications.”
- 6) Demonstrations helped learners in one program connect the literature they studied to social issues of the day. The issues were then analyzed and followed up with an oral presentation and a short discussion.
- 7) Speaking and listening workshops help students develop critical skills in another program. “We watch a film called Still Killing Us Softly, which addresses the impact of media on self-perception, women, men, relationships and values in general. The discussion/debate that occurs in the classroom is so dynamic!”

Success Strategies for a group of WSIB students was found to be effective in the initial integration of new students as the following account illustrates:

The course helps them to become informed enough to take ownership of their academic future. When I first started the facilitating the course, I delivered lots of material. After seven years I do very little delivery and mostly present topics and questions to the students who have the answers but may not have formalized these ideas and skills. I have found that it is very important that the ideas and skills are integrated into their everyday academic work. This way the skills are contextualized and relevant; otherwise, they are somewhat theoretical.

The following story describes one program's experiment with a 6-week group activity centred on the novel, **To Kill a Mockingbird**.

The class was broken up into 5 groups and each group was responsible for keeping its group members up to speed on what they had missed and what work they needed to do. New class members were added to a group when they entered into the program. We based the unit on the theory of "cooperative learning". After the unit was completed, we (the facilitators) had mixed feelings about the success of the unit. Some of the groups didn't succeed as well as others and some people felt that some members of their group didn't participate as much as others, but what was really interesting, was that when we discussed this unit with the learners they all wanted to do it again. They preferred working in the groups rather than in the individualized programming. They felt the class was much more interesting, and attendance for the group classes was significantly higher than for our other individualized classes.

What we have decided from this is that for each of our communication classes we will have a stand-alone group activity. This activity is the learning activity. The instructor will also give the learners an individual activity that needs to be completed by the next class. The key here is that the individual activity will be marked based on what learners need to work on according to their training plan, i.e., commas, organization, main idea, etc. Once they complete this successfully, we then give them a demonstration that is directly linked to their future goal. This is completed on an individual basis.

For those participants who would like to increase the amount of group instruction or explore other opportunities for learners to collaborate, a major stumbling block was identified. Bigger initiatives require the involvement of a whole team of teachers and adequate time for planning. Programs seldom have the time for this kind of planning as a

team, “We are usually repairing modules or addressing smaller issues of more immediate concern.” An additional concern was that new, innovative approaches to teaching and learning are not always met with enthusiasm by other staff members. This issue came up again in the next chapter discussion.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Implications

This chapter concludes by saying that professional development stands out as the most important means of improving the quality of instruction in adult basic literacy programs.

Questions posed to pilot participants:

Do you agree with the above statement? Do college LBS practitioners have sufficient opportunities for professional development they can apply directly to the classroom? What might that professional development look like?

Summary of chapter discussion:

PD was considered to be “an important key to improve the quality of instruction in adult basic literacy programs,” and “the one way to tackle the differing backgrounds in education and work experience of those engaged in teaching literacy programs.” It was also seen to have limited value if necessary structures were not in place to support it. Three important issues emerged during the discussion about PD.

ISSUE # 1: Access to PD

Practitioners need access to PD that is relevant and applicable to the LBS college classroom, i.e., professional development that addresses the realities of program philosophy and structure. This is more likely to happen if practitioners participate more fully in the decision-making around PD. Practitioners want more input into the kind of PD they participate in as the following comments from two participants illustrate:

Participant # 1 – Having interacted a great deal over the past few years with college LBS teachers around the province, the PD that I hear is most valued is exactly what we've been doing in this pilot – talking with other LBS teachers about what we do, what works, what doesn't, what we can share, and how we can improve. At the regional College Sector Committee PD events I've organized and/or attended across the province I hear so often that the 2 or 3 hours set aside for subject area discussion among teachers was the best part of the conference or event.

Participant # 2 – I have found it very beneficial to meet with other teachers from other colleges at regional conferences. I feel the ideas flow

more freely with face-to-face encounters. Resources can be discussed and shared on the spot. It is easier to concentrate on the ideas presented when you are away from your other responsibilities.

ISSUE # 2: Time to Engage in and Implement PD

Practitioners had two chief concerns – both in finding the time to participate in PD activities and in finding the time to implement ideas learned in PD activities. Several participants felt that LBS college practitioners currently do not have sufficient opportunity for PD.

The reason is primarily fiscal – there are simply not enough funds in the LBS budget to adequately cover it. Instead, money goes to operating items like salaries, books and supplies. Even where PD might

be free, money is a factor in replacing the LBS college practitioner who might want to attend an event. These problems have far reaching effects as the comment below illustrates:

PD activities can be a major obstacle when class numbers are high and replacement staff are practically non-existent.

Personally, I would like to see more time allowed for our own...staff to meet to discuss ideas and work on adapting and updating our resources on a monthly basis. We try to do this on a piece-meal and when-and-if-you're-free basis. This is not satisfactory and brings the morale of the department down.

ISSUE # 3: Resistance to Change

Teachers perceive program change and the need for program change in very different ways. Teachers who seek change and pursue it actively are very frustrated by other teachers (and/or institutions) that are ambivalent or resistant to it. Quality PD might provide teachers with new ideas, potential solutions to specific problems and new direction for their programs, but if there is no 'buy-in' from the whole team or from the department, very little if any of it will ever be implemented. One suggested solution focused on the importance of the hiring process, i.e., greater effort should be applied to hire practitioners who are more suited to adult basic education.

Other participants offered suggestions for coping with resistance and the lack of support:

Everyone is busy so if you want something, just make it happen and don't expect anyone else to know your needs. Talk about issues and ideas with your colleagues and things you would like to see happen. Not

everyone will embrace your style or thinking, but you will probably find at least one soul sister or brother.

These concerns are supported in a recent report, **How Teachers Change: A Study of Professional Development in Adult Education**. (Christine Smith et al.) This study was conducted to help in the planning and delivery of effective PD. Among the key findings was that teachers who gained the most from participating in professional development were ones who (1) participated for more hours in high quality PD, and (2) had well supported jobs with paid professional development release time and sufficient prep time.

Summary Remarks

While several topics and sub topics were discussed, some warranted further or deeper discussion. The timeframe did not allow for this and the discussion fell short of resolving (or at least of attempting to resolve) issues that arose. Two areas that the facilitators felt could have been addressed more fully are curriculum development and making meaning instruction. As one participant pointed out, after two weeks, one may just be beginning to get a handle on things:

Sometimes you don't find out what a person really wants to talk about until the very end of a conversation. In reading over the final entries, I was left with the impression that some teachers feel that curriculum development issues have become critical. Given that we are in business to provide an educational service, I agree that good quality learning materials/instruction are necessary for the long-term survival our programs. Aside from that, I think that students deserve to have the best materials/instruction that we can reasonably provide.

Evaluation Results

We know that LBS college programs vary considerably from college to college. Factors such as program size, number of sites and number of staff influence the structure, focus and management of programs. LBS college enrolment can range from 60 students to well over 200 at a single site at a given time. Some colleges do not have satellite programs while others have as many as four or five.

The 17 participants from 8 colleges who took part in the pilot, either as co-ordinators or teachers, represented a good cross section of LBS college programs. Most taught LBS/OBS academic upgrading. Others taught programs with a specific focus such as employment readiness or self-awareness/self-direction. Their class sizes varied to some extent depending on the size of the program and the method of instruction – individual or group format.

Fifteen participants (88%) returned evaluation surveys and 12 of those surveys were successfully returned by e-mail. The remaining 3 were returned by fax or regular mail. One participant who eventually returned the survey by mail had unsuccessfully tried sending it by e-mail and by fax. Technical problems were also a factor in why two surveys were not returned. At one site three participants completed the survey as a group.

As mentioned previously, the survey asked participants to comment on the potential of e-PD using AlphaCom. It was designed to elicit feedback on key factors that might influence participants' opinions. Some of these factors were: use of technology, the timeframe, facilitation, interest in the topic and relevance of the study. The data from the survey would be analyzed to discover correlations between these factors and participants' final thoughts about the potential use of e-PD.

Reasons for Participating

The survey asked practitioners to state their primary interest for participating in the pilot and to check off as many reasons as they wanted. Most (10 out of 15) said they were interested in the topic. Nine said they were interested in the process and that they generally take advantage of PD opportunities. Networking was important for 5 participants. Only one participant was interested in learning more about AlphaCom and e-PD.

Comments and other reasons for participating include:

- I really like the working through a report with other people – there isn't nearly enough time to do research when you are teaching full time and this was a good chance to do so.
- I was interested in online courses because I facilitate one myself.
- Supporting the efforts of the CSC in promoting PD and networking for college practitioners.
- (The pilot) relates to a working group on Self-Management/Self-Direction through the Ontario Literacy Coalition (that I'm involved in).

Technology

Thirteen participants identified themselves as previous users of AlphaCom. Of the two participants new to AlphaCom, one found it *easy* to log on and subscribe to the discussion, while the other found it *somewhat easy*. Nine participants also reported that AlphaCom was *easy* to navigate, "The instructions made logging on to the discussion site easy. Previously I had found it confusing and had not bothered with it for a year or so. AlphaCom has made their website easier to navigate too." Five other participants found AlphaCom *somewhat easy* to navigate and one said it was *not easy at all*. A primary concern, even for two of the participants who found it easy to use, was that AlphaCom was slow. There were many reasons for this as the following comments demonstrate:

- The platform (online delivery software) is slow, and it is not an especially easy system to navigate. Moving back and forth between the individual postings and the long list is difficult, and the idea of 'threads' doesn't work on this linear system.
- System was rather slow at times. Initially had some minor screen adjustment problems but managed to figure matters out.
- Slow to respond between each reading. Sometimes I would be in the middle of the responses and request to move up a message. To re-input, my password and user name would appear.
- It's hard to move back and forth from all discussions "to one discussion." It's also slow.
- I had used AlphaCom for other purposes. This was my first experience with a discussion group. I was surprised with how easy it was. AlphaCom is slow.
- I do think that AlphaCom has promise, though I found it difficult to navigate in one sense. Often when I was responding I wanted to go back to someone's message in the list to review a comment or question. It was difficult to do this

without losing the message I was in the middle of writing. I ended up copying relevant pieces of others' responses into a separate document and going back and forth between that document and my own message. So, overall, accessing the main list of messages was awkward. Maybe there's a better way than what I was doing.

- Still not always accessible – server down – bounced off frozen screen after typing message.

In spite of frustrations with the platform, 11 recommended using AlphaCom for future e-PD events. Two would not recommend it while 2 others were undecided.

Content

Participants were asked if 3 hours was sufficient for reading the classroom dynamics study. Their responses were split – 7 said yes and 8 said no. One participant commented that it probably took twice as long to 'reread' the study as it took to read it the first time.

Participants were also asked (a) how interesting, and (b) how relevant they found the study. The responses were:

Very interesting – 4	Very relevant – 4
Interesting – 6	Relevant – 7
Somewhat interesting – 4	Somewhat relevant – 4
Not very Interesting – 1	Not very relevant – 0

Participants provided a number of comments about the study and their reaction to it:

- As a whole it was certainly applicable to LBS. It is very refreshing to read something in which continuous intake and mixed level classrooms are actually understood and discussed in the context of adult basic education. One drawback was that there was limited material in the study pertaining to completely individualized delivery, which of course is what the majority of us do in LBS. Still, there were many tangible links from the article to LBS programming, delivery and clientele.
- (I) like the idea of reading and responding to articles; they do not have to be exactly about what we do in order for them to be interesting and useful. Good springboard for discussion. I liked hearing what other people do in their programs, and hearing how differently college programs are organized. I didn't feel like we had enough time to start engaging with the tougher issues. Building community is hard, and I don't think we got very far in talking about why or what to do about it.
- It was the e-discussion that truly brought the study to life for LBS.

- It (the study) identifies the variables we work with in our programs.
- This was probably the best article available, since there is so little research in academic upgrading. It would be nice to have something of this nature done with our classrooms.
- More current and Canadian content. The verbose document provided no surprising findings, which contributed to my lack of interest.

Pilot Information and Instructions

Participants were asked to comment on the background information, details about their roles as participants and instructions for reading the report. Twelve participants found the information and instructions to be *sufficient* while 3 found them to be *somewhat sufficient*.

- When I started, I was worried I would be wasting all sorts of time just trying to get in, receiving messages and sending messages. As it turned out, none of this was a problem.
- Very clear and timely instructions.

E-Discussion

Four participants found the discussion to be *active and engaging*, 9 to be *sufficient to hold their interest* and 2 to be *generally lacking*. Participants were split on the 2-week timeframe allocated for the discussion. While 7 found it *adequate*, 4 found it *somewhat adequate* and 4 *not adequate*. As their comments indicate, finding enough time to participate fully in a concentrated discussion with a strict timeframe was a key problem for several participants.

Comments and suggestions for a better timeframe:

- LONGER! I would rather have a longer session than an intense short one. We all have a million other things on our plates, and this doesn't give enough time to read, process, and respond. There are many other things I would like to say, and other questions I would like to engage with, but I can't.
- Would have appreciated more time to respond. Work duties the last two days made it impossible for me to participate. I do apologize. Generally speaking, I tended to go online later in the evening after my marking and lesson preps were done. This made for a very long day.
- Felt a bit rushed – possibly 3 weeks. Would suggest reading a chapter and then responding instead of reading the whole report and then responding on a chapter-by-chapter basis.

- Too time consuming overall. Prefer traditional PD with this as part of discussion.
- When I'm not teaching!
- Although I wanted to participate further, the workload at the college became overwhelming. I thought at the time of registration that the timeframe was perfect. I wish I had more free time to participate.
- I think that such a discussion needs to be extended over a longer period, perhaps 4 weeks, without the expectation of logging on every day. It is difficult to devote sufficient time every day to read the posted messages and respond in a meaningful way. Perhaps logging on 2-3 times per week would be better. I do, however, understand the necessity of not letting the discussion drag on so long that it loses momentum.
- Given the challenges with AlphaCom and program responsibilities, 2 weeks is too compressed. The number of participants and short timeframe did not allow real dialogue. I couldn't respond to all the interesting postings.
- Another week would have been good.

Facilitation

Eight participants reported that the facilitation of the discussion was *very satisfactory*, 5 *satisfactory* and 1 *somewhat satisfactory*.

Comments and suggestions for improved facilitation:

- I think because time was too short, the facilitators felt things needed to hurry along. I am a more process-based learner, and don't like to be rushed. More time would mean that things wrapped up when they were done (i.e., people had run out of steam on an idea), rather than when the cut off came. I would have liked this to have been 6 weeks or so, so we could spend a week on each chapter. There would be times when things were slow and that would be okay.
- Facilitators' suggestions and summaries were most helpful in guiding the discussion. At this was a first for me, it was easy to get sidetracked on topics connected to teaching but not specifically related to the study.
- At the beginning, I sensed that the facilitators were waiting for input as to how we should proceed. No one wanted to step on anyone's toes, I guess. Perhaps the facilitators could have been a little more directive to get things off and running more quickly. Because this was a new experience for many of us, we weren't too certain of the etiquette involved.
- Kept people focused, excellent summaries.

- Need streams for discussion, more time to pursue ideas, possibly limiting the number of participants with this format.
- Might have been useful to ask for participants for items that they would like the group to consider. Some participants waited until the last day or so to do this.

The comments pointed to some of the challenges the facilitators faced. Co-facilitating the e-discussion on AlphaCom was a new and challenging experience for both facilitators. Before and during the discussion, the facilitators communicated frequently by e-mail to clarify roles, assess information, confer on direction and provide support.

Other ways e-PD could be used

Participants were asked to check off other ways e-PD could be used. The topics and responses (expressed as percents) are as follows:

Topics	Percentage Response
Mini-digest (posting summaries/reviews of reports/articles and providing web links)	73%
Planning PD events	67%
Exploring issues related to professional development	60%
Larger scale reading and response activities	47%
More structured PD activities	40%

Participants were also asked to suggest other topics. As you can see, the list is quite extensive.

Suggestions for topics:

- Teaching styles and application to classroom
- Use of technology
- Use of computers in class – strengths and weaknesses
- Sharing ideas and experiences with software
- Best practices in subject areas
- Best practices regarding redirection, especially with difficult learners
- Self-Management/Self-Direction – defining and incorporating relevant topics into existing curriculum
- Accommodating learners with special needs (including physical & emotional supports for those on WSIB) in college LBS programs

- Workplace/Workforce – Defining and incorporating relevant topics into existing curriculum
- Small group chat activities.
- Universal Instructional Design – what does this mean to LBS program design?
- Facilitating change in LBS programs (internally and externally)
- Attracting new clients
- Sharing of specific demonstrations
- Sharing techniques and strategies
- Classroom materials with Canadian content
- Curriculum development
- Would be useful for short-term, specific activities or discussions
- Retention/Persistence
- Linking literacy to employment
- Preparing learners with learning disabilities for post-secondary
- Planning/co-ordinating curriculum development provincially...can we co-ordinate our efforts?
- Posting useful, proven resources related to a particular curriculum development area with a short explanation of how they are used and where they are available

Comment:

E-PD could be useful for discussions that support teachers in knowing that they are not alone in their efforts to provide effective programming for LBS/OBS students. I think that this was very much an outcome of our session. Even if it had focused on a topic other than classroom management, I'm sure the outcome would have been the same. All the participants gained something other than comparative data on classroom management. They gained support and reinforcement from colleagues province-wide who are struggling with the same issues and/or experiences in LBS/OBS classrooms. Because we are often so isolated within our own institutions, the e-PD format provides a mini-network of support, ideas and commiseration.

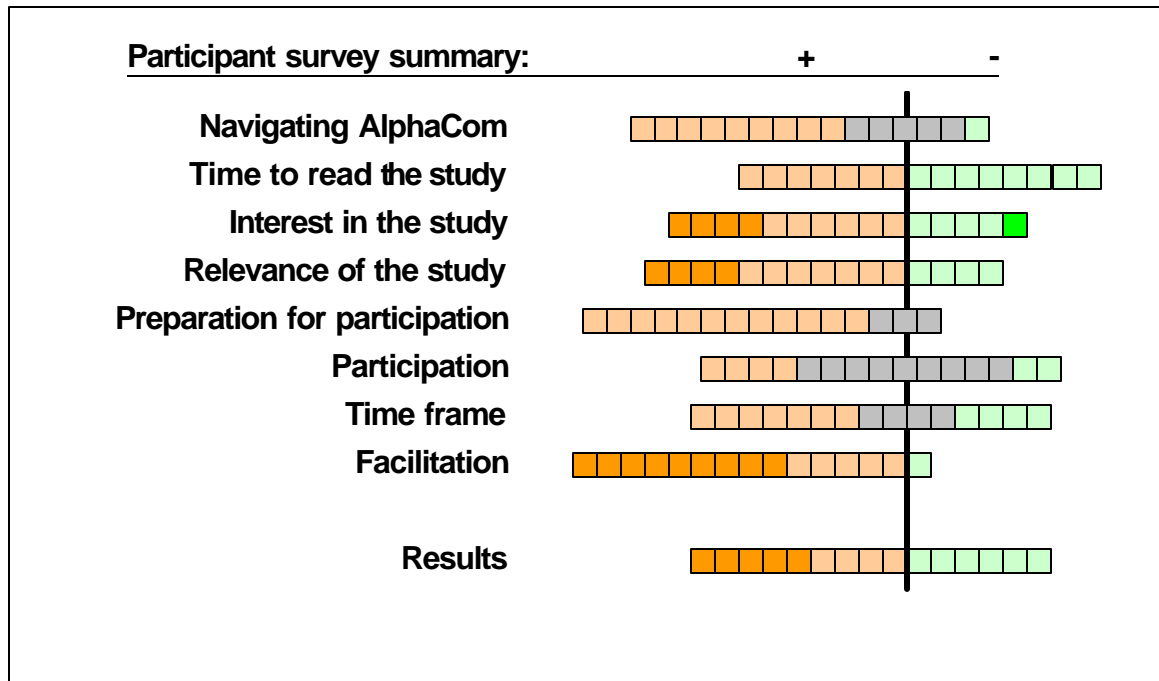
Potential for e-PD using AlphaCom

Participants were asked how they felt overall about the potential for e-PD using AlphaCom. This was a pivotal question for the pilot. The responses were mixed.

- Very promising – 5
- Promising – 4
- Somewhat promising – 6 *
- Not promising – 1*

* Please note that in one survey two boxes, *somewhat promising* and *not promising*, were both checked. This explains the total of 16.

In brief, 9 participants (60%) felt positive about the potential for e-PD using AlphaCom, while 6 participants (40%) felt somewhat less positive. The next step was to identify any factors that might have influenced participants’ opinions about the potential of e-PD using AlphaCom. The graphic that follows provides a visual snapshot of those 8 factors. The thick vertical line represents a cut-off point. The bars to the left of the line indicate a more positive influence while the bars to the right, a more negative one.



As mentioned on the previous page, two boxes (*somewhat promising* and *not promising*) in one survey were both checked for the question about potential. For the purpose of creating the graphic, the researcher had to choose one designation. *Somewhat promising*

was chosen based on the assumption that checking two responses implied some hesitancy on the part of the participant.

As you can see from the graphic, five factors appeared to exert a positive influence on the pilot itself. They are: navigating AlphaCom, interest in the study, relevance of the study, preparation for the study (instructions for participating, logging on, etc.) and facilitation of the discussion. The three factors that exerted a negative influence on the pilot are: sufficient time to read the study, participation in the discussion and the two-week time frame.

Key factors were also examined to discover how they correlated with participants' final thoughts about the potential for e-PD using AlphaCom. Interestingly, no significant correlations were found. In other words, no single factor appeared to greatly influence how participants felt about the potential of e-PD using AlphaCom.

Another approach was considered based on the premise that surveys indicating less support for the potential of e-PD would have a greater number of negative factors. All surveys were examined for multiple (more than one) negative factors. This premise, however, did not hold. At least 3 surveys, supportive of the potential of e-PD using AlphaCom, included multiple negative factors. Equally, 2 surveys not supportive of e-PD included only 1 negative factor, while a third included no negative factors at all.

Ultimately the qualitative feedback provided more insight into why participants did or did not support e-PD using AlphaCom. Two important topics emerged in participants' final comments. They are time constraints and the AlphaCom platform.

Comments:

- 1) Overall, I enjoyed this, and was glad that I participated. I knew that it would be time consuming. It was! I ended up spending evenings reading or responding. People need to know up front that it will be time consuming. What I found disappointing/difficult was the lack of engagement with each other. There might be many reasons for this, but one, I think, is the AlphaCom platform itself. What happened here was one response after another. Partly that is lack of time, but also, I think, that the platform does not encourage conversations.
- 2) From my perspective, keeping the number of participants limited to 20 or less is a useful parameter as it is easy to get to 'know' each participant's situation, ideas and personality. More would have made it difficult for individual responses. The reading took some time and then the thinking about each response took time too. Too many voices would make the process too time consuming. If a topic generates a large number of participants, then subdividing

into smaller groups would work, I think. Then after the discussion had run its time, perhaps sharing the results of each group would be helpful.

- 3) Thank you for a fabulous job on this pilot. I found the experience to be a most positive one. As I am relatively new to this world, it was great to hear participants comment from their realities and vast experience. I definitely gleaned a lot in terms of thinking about what we do in our program and how we can grow. It was reassuring to get a sense that we are not alone on this journey and that others are feeling the same joys as well as frustrations. The e-PD format was interesting to experience. Time constraints seemed to be my biggest challenge. My initial reaction is that it would be an appropriate way to address certain topics but not a replacement for face-to-face type conferences and workshops.
- 4) E-PD is definitely a second choice. Face-to-face is much better for me for learning and discussing things.
- 5) It (e-PD) has potential. While many participants made worthwhile contributions, others seem to see it as a means to mount on their soap boxes. Good discussion topics – minimal learning aside from discussion. Reading and response too time consuming. Have no time for this format and very limited actual learning. Cost saving for college budget – however, too much time spent with no pay.
- 6) This was a great way to share ideas with many people and not have to get in my car and fight my way through traffic. This has a lot of potential.
- 7) I don't really like AlphaCom as a platform – what about Web c+ (Ontario Learn)
- 8) I enjoyed this experience because it had a beginning and an end and facilitators. I expect an unfacilitated discussion group without a focussed timeframe would be much less productive. So I think future e- discussions should have this format, not just open discussion.

In addition to the survey comments, there were a number of comments and observations of an evaluative nature throughout the discussion. Had it been anticipated that so many participants would comment on the pilot itself and their participation in it, this more informal evaluative approach would have been considered in the initial design of the pilot.

One theme, that resonated though much of the discussion, was how interesting it was to hear about other programs. Participants talked about how important it was to be able to get together to share information, ideas and issues. Community, it seems, is just as important to teachers as it is to students.

Following are a number of participants' comments about the pilot and about participating:

- It is always wonderful to listen to academic upgrading teachers talk about their work. It is amazing how much we have in common in such different settings. Mostly I have noticed how much we enjoy what we do and how much respect and compassion we have for our students. We all want to give them the best opportunity possible.
- It has been really nice to learn about other teachers in the field and about their programs, I will now be able to think about and share what I have been reading from all of you during the past two weeks.
- Thanks to everyone for the interesting, thought-provoking discussion. As someone said early on, it's amazing how much our situations have in common as adult educators working in LBS. I have gained a few ideas from this PD that I hope to try, though as...others said, it's hard to follow through on ideas that we hear or see.
- This reading and response pilot, for example, is helping most of us to focus on what we have, what others have, and how to improve our own programs. It's been informative reading everyone's responses and forming one of my own, based on their input.
- Seems funny to be writing a final response. In a very practical way, I found the format of the discussion frustrating, because AlphaCom doesn't allow for 'threads' in the same way that other bulletin board programs do. When you can see threads, I think it's easier to develop something that resembles a conversation more closely than this did. As a result of this, I found myself wishing that the platform allowed for more engagement between people, teasing out of ideas, grappling with issues that are difficult. But as I sit down to write this, I have a sense of a 'community' out there that I thought hadn't been sufficiently created. That's quite encouraging, I think. I do believe there is enormous value in an exercise like this, despite the limitations, and it sounds like many others think so too. I am looking forward to discussing some of the issues that were raised here with my colleagues, and seeing where we can take them.
- I have found some good ideas from our pilot discussion, but I generally have found it time consuming and frustrating because of the structure and the time it takes to type.

- For me, this has been a wonderful way to exchange information, ideas, and concerns. I feel that this process offers participants these advantages:
 - a. To receive complete messages from others, and be able to read/reread them as needed for full understanding and consideration. This is in contrast to being at a meeting and unable to hear everything over ordinary noises (coughing, side conversations ...) in the room, or the speaker not projecting his/her voice well enough to be heard properly. I read many of the postings more than once and would get more out of them the second time.
 - b. To be free and feel safe to state one's opinions without interruptions, time limits, and, yes, without upsetting sighs or body language (rolling eyes or laughter) from others who disagree with a viewpoint. E-mail discussions are great for allowing everyone (full-time, part-time, shy, unpopular ...) equal opportunity to participate to whatever extent desired. This encourages maximum input which is more beneficial to the group.
 - c. To be able to participate when convenient (day or night) provides maximum opportunity for participation.
 - d. These positive aspects of the process result in a virtually stress free experience (for me anyway)!

Conclusion

The e-PD Reading and Response Pilot was unique in two ways. It was the first PD activity that asked LBS practitioners from different colleges to read and respond in a group format to a particular document. It was also the first time that a PD activity was carried out with LBS college practitioners using AlphaCom. Based on current research in the area of effective PD for adult educators, the pilot was developed to engage practitioners in an extended, collaborative and professionally meaningful activity. The research also emphasized the importance of voluntary participation and small group size.

An invitation to participate in the pilot was extended to all colleges, but limited to the first 8 colleges to reply. Ultimately, 17 practitioners from 8 different colleges took part in the pilot.

The topic for discussion was:

What are we currently doing in our programs and classrooms to build community among our students and minimize the impact of continuous enrolment and large, mixed classes?

In LBS programs, continuous intake responds to students' needs for flexible schedules and continuous entry into the program.

The discussion was moderated by two facilitators although participants decided how they wanted the discussion structured. It was hoped that each participant would post a minimum of two messages related to the discussion. Overall, participation exceeded expectations with a total of 117 messages posted during the two week discussion. This represented nearly 70 pages of single-spaced script. More than two thirds of the messages were posted by participants. While there was sufficient discussion, it was uneven; some participants posted as many as 8 or 9 messages while others posted only 1 or 2.

The ensuing discussion showed that participants cared deeply about community and worked hard to achieve it. They provided detailed descriptions of their classroom settings and how they tried to create a classroom atmosphere that was comfortable for their learners – both emotionally and physically. They shared several strategies for responding in a timely way to students' learning needs. They discussed instructional challenges imposed by continuous intake. One critical challenge is helping students develop skills that require collaboration with other students – essential skills like critical thinking and problem-solving that prepare students for employment and further education/training. The participants also tackled PD issues that were complex, difficult and frustrating – ones for which there were no simple answers and ones over which they felt little control. They discussed the crucial need for a high quality curriculum and the lack of time and support for developing one.

The pilot was evaluated formally by means of an electronic survey. The pivotal question on the survey asked participants to comment on the potential for e-PD using AlphaCom. The survey also elicited feedback on key factors that might influence participants' responses. Key factors included use of technology, the timeframe, facilitation, interest in the topic and relevance of the study. The data from the survey was analyzed to discover correlations between these factors and practitioners' responses.

Participants' responses to the potential of e-PD using AlphaCom were mixed. Sixty percent (9 of the 15 participants who returned surveys) felt that e-PD using AlphaCom was *very promising* or *promising*. The remaining participants felt it was only *somewhat promising*. Yet 73% of participants (11 out of 15) recommended using AlphaCom for future e-PD events; two more were undecided. Also, more than half the participants supported the use of e-PD for:

- posting summaries and/reviews of reports and articles
- planning PD events
- exploring issues related to PD

An examination of the factors showed that there were more positive factors influencing the outcome of the pilot than negative ones. No correlations between specific factors and participants' opinions about e-PD were found. Although less reliable, the considerable amount of feedback offered by participants in the survey pointed to some answers. Several participants reported frustration with the AlphaCom platform. While the platform may be useful for specific kinds of activities, it seems it is not as effective in supporting a complex discussion with many nuances and threads.

Other important issues related to professional development emerged through the survey and the discussion itself. Most of these were in one way or another related to the pressures of time, especially finding time to participate in PD activities like the pilot. The reasons cited were general program demands, high class numbers and the unavailability of replacement staff. Several participants commented on the stress that the additional work of participating in the pilot created – work that often had to be done in the evenings or very late at night.

Time pressures affected the pilot in other ways. Because time was at a premium, it increased participants' expectations for the pilot. While some participants were content discussing concepts, others were more interested in learning techniques and strategies they could apply immediately. Time pressures were also evident in their responses to the two-week timeframe for the discussion. Less than half found the timeframe adequate. Most of the others felt they needed at least another week. In some cases the time pressures were unanticipated and practitioners' workloads simply became overwhelming. These pressures most likely influenced practitioners' motivation levels and participation

rates during the e-discussion. Finally, some participants commented that time was also an issue in implementing ideas learned in PD activities.

One positive theme, which resonated throughout much of the discussion, was how interesting it was to hear about other programs . Participants talked about how important it was to be able to get together to share information, ideas and issues. Community is vital to teachers just as it is to students.

What is the potential of e-PD for LBS practitioners? Although some participants may have been disappointed in the overall outcome of the pilot, others found the discussion stimulating and worth the effort in spite of frustrations with the medium and constraints imposed by their workload. Most participants appreciated the opportunity to communicate and share concerns, challenges and ideas with other teachers in similar settings. They could do this at a time and place that offered some measure of convenience. While e-PD cannot and should not be a substitute for face-to-face meetings, it does offer important advantages in terms of accessibility. It also offers the only realistic alternative for extended PD activities where costs would be prohibitive. For these reasons, e-PD should be explored further. This pilot was an important first step toward understanding the full potential of e-PD. Many lessons were learned. Collectively the literacy field can build on these lessons to develop more supportive, meaningful and participatory e-PD activities for LBS practitioners in the future.

Recommendations

Recommendation # 1

Continue to explore the potential of e-PD based on lessons learned from the pilot. Try smaller, more concrete e-PD activities. Consider the topics suggested by the participants. Research other forms of online delivery-software (platforms) for more advanced or complex types of e-discussion.

Recommendation # 2

Find ways to support practitioners' participation in quality e-PD activities. Professional development has been shown to be more effective when delivered over an extended time period. Participation in expanded e-PD activities needs to be recognized and compensated for in some way – especially for those who take on a leadership role. Research “best times” for extended professional development.

Recommendation # 3

Establish a mechanism for LBS practitioners to identify PD topics that are relevant and meaningful to them.

Recommendation # 4

Continue the discussion of important issues raised in the pilot – issues linked to professional development, curriculum development, making meaning instruction and creating community in the LBS classroom.

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References

- [1] Kerka, page 1.

Appendix 1 – Memo

MEMO



TO: LBS College Managers
FROM: Dee Goforth, Consultant
DATE: November 4, 2003
RE: Reaching the People Who Need It Most – Reading and Response Pilot

For the past two years, the College Sector Committee supported professional development for LBS college staff primarily through regional training events. While these events were very successful, feedback indicates that many practitioners are unaware of new resources developed by the literacy field – both inside and outside of Ontario. Of those practitioners who are aware of these resources, many do not have time to read them.

To respond to practitioners' needs, the College Sector Committee has applied for and received funding for the project, *Reaching the People Who Need It Most*. Goforth Consulting has been hired for the initial phase of this project. The aim of the project is to bring practitioners together for focused reading and response activities. While there are various ways to accomplish this, the CSC would like to investigate the potential of e-PD. If proven effective, this method could provide a relatively inexpensive means of connecting college practitioners across the province in the future.

The CSC is proposing a pilot that would involve the participation of practitioners (minimum of 3 per college) from 8 different LBS college programs. Practitioners' responsibilities would include:

- 1) reading an 80 page document on issues related to classroom management and student retention during a **one-week** time frame (guiding questions will be provided)
- 2) participating in a subsequent **two-week** long electronic discussion group on AlphaCom
- 3) completing an evaluation of the pilot by means of a short survey

The document for reading will be available online or distributed in print format. It is recommended as a 'must-read' by the Classroom Management project and considered to be of high interest and relevance to LBS college practitioners. To facilitate access to AlphaCom, practitioners will be provided with instructions for joining AlphaPlus and logging on to the discussion group.

The pilot is process- rather than product-oriented. It is meant to discover the strengths and weaknesses of e-PD. More importantly, it is meant to focus on practitioner participation.

You can assist in making this pilot a success. If practitioners from your program are interested in participating in the pilot, please provide the information requested in the two charts below. Then simply save as a new file and return by e-mail before November 21st.

Please identify the preferred time frame(s) for the pilot by using following numbers to indicate preference.

- 1 – preferred time frame
- 2 – acceptable time frame
- 3 – least acceptable time frame

TIME FRAME	Indication of preference
December 1 to December 19 (2003)	
January 5 to January 23 (2004)	
January 12 to January 30 (2004)	

Please forward names and e-mail addresses of 3 or more practitioners in your program who would be interested in participating in the pilot.

Name	E-mail Address

Please note: Should more than 8 colleges respond to the memo, the first 8 to respond will be selected to participate.

If you have and questions or suggestions, you can reach me by:

E-mail: goforth@ican.net

Tel: (705) 673-0692

Mail:

Goforth Consulting
285 Boland Avenue
Sudbury, ON
P3E 1Y1

Thank you for your assistance.

Dee Goforth

Appendix 2 – Pilot Package

CSC Reading and Response Pilot Information Package

Dear Participant:

Thank you again for participating in this e-PD pilot project. This information package describes the project, explains your role as participant, identifies the topic of discussion, and provides instructions for reading the report and for logging on to the discussion group. The discussion group will be facilitated by Bob Smith from Sir Sandford Fleming College and myself, Dee Goforth.

Please also let me know if you have any questions about any of the information. You can contact me by:

Tel: (705) 673-0692

E-mail: goforth@ican.net

Background

For the past two years, the College Sector Committee supported professional development for LBS college staff primarily through regional training events. While these events proved to be very successful, feedback indicates that many practitioners are unaware of new resources developed by the literacy field both inside and outside of Ontario. For those practitioners who may be aware of these resources, many often do not have time to read them.

To respond to practitioners' PD needs, the College Sector Committee is undertaking a new project called, *Reaching the People Who Need It Most*. The aim of the project is to bring practitioners together for focused reading and response activities. While the CSC will try different approaches, it would like to begin by investigating the potential of e-PD through a pilot project. If proven effective, this method could provide a readily accessible and relatively inexpensive means of connecting college practitioners across the province. This pilot represents *Phase 1* of the project.

Participant's Role

As a participant, you will be expected to:

- 1) Read a document (approximately 80 pages) on a topic identified by college practitioners as important. The goal was to have all pilot participants read the document during the same week – **from January 12-16**. This may not be possible for the practitioners who preferred the December time frame. These

practitioners may wish to read it in December rather than January. Direction will be provided to help focus the reading. (See **Appendix A** for further details.)

- 2) Participate in a subsequent electronic discussion group on AlphaCom which will take place in a 2-week time frame – **from January 19 to 30**. The goal for participation is to log in each day the discussion is active (10 days), read comments and post responses. (See **Appendix B** for information about AlphaPlus and AlphaCom, instructions for logging on to the discussion group and instructions for sending messages.)
- 3) Complete an evaluation of the pilot by means of an electronic survey. This will be e-mailed to each participant on the last day of the discussion, **January 30**. A printed copy is also included in your package. The printed copy is a backup to be used only if you have difficulty with the e-version.

In all, it is anticipated that participants will commit approximately 9-10 hours to the pilot. For those participants who are not already familiar with AlphaCom, it may take more. The focus is on practitioner participation. We want to learn what works and what makes it work...and vice versa of course. Ultimately, the CSC wants to know if e-PD is viable and how it can be used.

Next Steps

Survey results will be tabulated and key recommendations made. This information will be shared with participants and the CSC. The CSC will decide next steps for e-PD based on the results of the pilot and recommendations.

The Report

The document that you will be reading is **Classroom Dynamics in Adult Literacy Education**, by Hal Beder and Patsy Medina of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (Harvard University Graduate School of Education). Some of you may have already read this report. It provides a detailed and comprehensive description of classroom behaviour in adult literacy programs in the United States. **Don't panic when you see it!** It contains a lot of white space and you will not be required to read the entire report.

Why was this document chosen? This report was identified as a must-read for practitioners by the CSC classroom management project. First of all, it is the only study since 1975 to address the issues of classroom behaviour. The study takes us into 20 adult literacy classrooms and shows us how instruction is structured and delivered. Secondly it links classroom management to student retention which is an issue of ongoing concern to LBS college programs. Thirdly, it highlights three critical issues that impact LBS college programs. They are (1) continuous student intake (2) large, multi-level classrooms and (3) funding pressures. The report provides us with an opportunity to look at these issues

more closely. A number of US college programs participated in the study, but the study also included a wider variety of program types including community-based, school board, workplace and welfare sponsored. Although not all observations and conclusions will apply to colleges, the findings of the research are provocative and interesting.

The report was also chosen for a very practical reason. Dr. Beder agreed that the CSC could make a limited number of copies. One of the challenges of e-learning is to ensure that all participants have access to printed materials and that they receive their materials on time. For future e-PD events participants should be able to select a topic of mutual interest for discussion.

Focus for E-discussion

The purpose of the e-discussion which will take place on AlphaCom is to encourage as much dialogue as possible within the two-week time frame. This may take the form of reaction to the study itself, responding to posed questions, sharing some of your own experiences and practices in the classroom, and offering various strategies and approaches to managing the classroom. While we may arrive at some interesting conclusions of our own, the focus of the discussion is on engagement and participation.

Topic for E-discussion

The report hypothesizes that community is a critical part of successful learning in an adult education program. 'Community' is described in the study as a sense of belonging or relatedness among members. (See page 79 for a more detailed description.) While there are many factors that facilitate community, there are two factors (according to the study) that impede and are particularly damaging to community. They are continuous enrolment and large, mixed classes. The classroom teacher and indeed the program itself may have little control over this arrangement. Nor is it likely to change any time soon since it responds to students' needs for a wide offering of courses, flexible schedules and continuous entry into the program. The study suggests that there may be some effective ways to deal with continuous enrolment and large, mixed level classes but that further research is needed. I am proposing that we tackle these issues in relation to our own programs/classrooms by discussing the question below:

What are we currently doing in our programs and classrooms to build community among our students and minimize the impact of continuous enrolment and large, mixed classes?

This does not rule out other topics! Please put forward other ideas for topics after you have read the report.

Appendix A

Reading Instructions

Everybody has different strategies for reading reports, so please approach the report in your own way. You may want to read it all from start to finish. You may want to skim certain parts and delve into others. I've highlighted particular points from the chapters for reflection (see following page) and for possible discussion on AlphaCom, but please raise other ones.

Please note that **Chapter 2: Literature Review** is optional. The study was qualitative in nature and did not draw on an established body of literature. In effect, there was very little research on classroom dynamics in adult literacy education. One study, though, is worth noting since reference is made to it later in the report. Mehan's research (1979) involved the observation of elementary school children. Lessons in the classrooms were generally characterized by a series of teacher-posed questions and student responses referred to as IRE – Initiate, Reply, Evaluate. Mehan's study is discussed in Chapter 4 in greater detail.

For Reflection

Chapter 3: Research Context

This chapter says that most of the teachers observed in the study tried to create a “trusting, respectful, and emotionally comfortable classroom atmosphere conducive to learning.”



For reflection: What might some of the challenges be in creating an emotionally comfortable classroom in the college environment? Do you think the physical appearance of the classroom is important to learners?

Notes:

Chapter 4: The Content and Structure of Instruction

This chapter includes a section on individualized instruction (pages 47-49) and identifies two major challenges:

- 1) providing help to students when they need it
- 2) correcting students' work in a timely manner (waiting for corrections can hold students back because they have no other way to know whether they have successfully learned what their curriculum has directed them to do)



For reflection: Are these key challenges for LBS college classrooms? If so, what approaches can programs use to respond to these challenges?

Notes:

The chapter concludes by questioning what kind of instruction is best for adult learners. In the 20 classes observed, instruction was mainly orientated to basic skill development.



For reflection: If it is important to focus on problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity and social awareness in the LBS class room, how can this be done when the form of instruction is to a large extent individualized?

Notes:

Chapter 5: Classroom Process

This chapter says that many classroom processes are linked by a concept of community. Community is described by a feeling that members have of belonging – that they matter to one another and to the group. Introducing new students to other students in the classroom and providing opportunities for students to collaborate seemed particularly important in building community.



For reflection: Think of some strategies for ensuring (a) that new students are welcomed into the class (b) that learner collaboration happens in the classroom.

Notes:

Read Chapter 6: Shaping Factors

This chapter concludes by saying that such factors as enrolment ‘turbulence,’ funding eligibility and large mixed classes make it difficult to achieve classroom stability and community.



For reflection: What impact do these factors have on LBS college programs? Are there other factors that shape LBS college programs?

Notes:

Read Chapter 7: Conclusions and Implications

This chapter concludes (page 97) that professional development stands out as the most important means of improving the quality of instruction in adult basic literacy programs.



For reflection: Do you agree with this statement? Do college LBS practitioners have sufficient opportunities for professional development they can apply directly to the classroom?

Notes:

Appendix B

If you are **already registered** on AlphaCom, please **go to page 7**. If not, please continue.

AlphaPlus is a large provincial literacy organization situated in Toronto that helps users (tutors, practitioners, volunteers, and researchers) find relevant resources and information on a variety of topics. Trained staff are available to answer general literacy-related questions, to recommend materials and to provide referrals to other literacy resources. Once you become a member, you are eligible to borrow books, audio tapes, videotapes and software online. You are also able to purchase a number of publications.

AlphaPlus produces:

- A newsletter, [Access Alpha](#)
- Quick lists (short bibliographies on selected topics)
- The Guide to Literacy Services in Ontario

AlphaPlus also features:

- AlphaRoute, an interactive, online learning environment for students
- **AlphaCom**, an online discussion system

You can take a tour of AlphaPlus. If you are interested in borrowing materials, you can become a member by calling 1-800-788-1120 or logging on at: <http://alphaplus.ca> You do not need to join AlphaPlus to use **AlphaCom**. You can register online.

Instructions for Registering with AlphaCom:

- Log onto AlphaPlus at: <http://alphaplus.ca>
- Roll over the green AlphaCom box located at the top left of the page and you will see a drop down menu.
- Click on **Quick Start Guide** for step-by-step instructions for registering.
- Click on **Register**.
- Follow instructions for registering (You will need a user name and an 8-character password). Don't forget to click the submit button at the bottom of the page.

Once you have successfully submitted your registration form, you will be immediately registered and receive notification. If you experience problems, **do not try to register again**. Call AlphaPlus toll free at 1-800-788-1120 for assistance. You will hear a list of services. **Press 2** for English and then **Press 4** for technical services. You can also contact the web master by e-mail at: webmaster@alphaplus.ca

Instructions for Subscribing to *Reading and Response* Pilot Discussion

One you are registered:

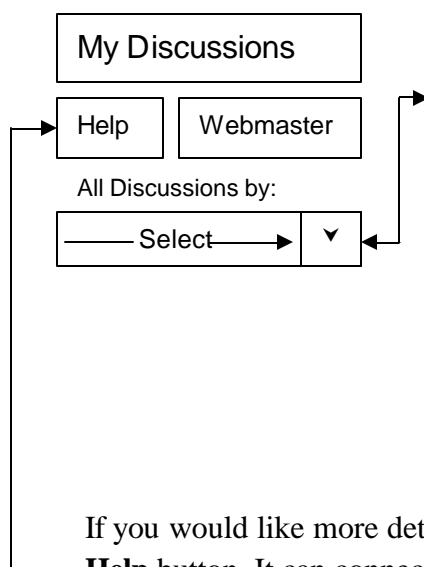
- Roll over on the green AlphaCom box located at the top left of the page and for the drop down menu.
- Click on AlphaCom discussions.

You will be able to access any public discussion you wish. Each user has a permanent *Subscribed Discussions* list. You must initially subscribe to each discussion in which you wish to participate. Every discussion you join is added to your *Subscribed Discussions* list.

There are extra steps for subscribing to private discussions. The CSC Reading and Response Pilot discussion is a private one.

The instructions below will help you subscribe to the pilot discussion group.

Once you're on the *Subscribed Discussions* page, you will a side bar with the following boxes displayed on it.



The name of our discussion is **CSC Reading and Response Pilot**. To subscribe, click on the down arrow to get the drop down menu.

Choose English Private. Then use **→Next Page** (located at the bottom of the page) to scroll through alphabetically to get the title.

Click on the title. A screen will appear with a brief description of the topic. On the top of the screen you'll see the button **Subscribe to Discussion**. Click on the button to subscribe. It may take a few days before you are notified that you have been joined to the discussion.

If you would like more detailed instructions or require assistance, you can click on the **Help** button. It can connect you to the webmaster by e-mail if you need technical assistance or advice. You can also call AlphaPlus and talk to the webmaster: 1-800-788-1120.

Please also let me know if you have any difficulties registering. You can contact me by e-mail or phone.

Dee Goforth

Tel: (705) 673-0692

E-mail: goforth@ican.net

Instructions for Adding Your Message

CSC Reading and Response Pilot

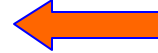
Main Message

Author:

Date: 01/22/2004 02:24 PM

Category:

Subject:



The title of the message goes here



The message goes here

Send Notification of this new message to:

All people subscribed to this discussion



Clicking in this box notifies other participants that a message has been sent



You must click on this button after you have composed your letter in the box above (2nd Arrow). This is the command that actually sends your message.

Appendix 3 – CSC Reading and Response Pilot Evaluation Survey

Name: _____

College: _____

Please complete the survey and return by February 4. Once you have completed it, the easiest way to return it is to save it [as a new file](#) and e-mail it as an attachment to goforth@ican.net.

If you have difficulties with the e-survey, you can **fax** the questionnaire to: (705) 560-0101

A third option is to send it by **regular mail** to:

Goforth Consulting
285 Boland Avenue
Sudbury, ON
P3E 1Y1

Your assistance and valuable input are very much appreciated. Survey results will be forwarded to you as soon as they are compiled. Thank-you on behalf of the College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading.

Instructions: Please check **any** or **all** boxes that apply. Simply click once **in** text box and type 'X' or comment. Then click outside the box. When typing in a box, please keep your font size at 12 pt or less.

Involvement

1. State your primary reason for participating.

- interested in the topic
- interested in the process
- interested in learning more about AlphaCom and e-PD
- usually take advantage of PD opportunities
- networking

Other:

Technology

1. Were you a previous user of AlphaCom?

- Yes No

If **no**, how easy was it to log on to AlphaCom and subscribe to the e-discussion?

- Easy Somewhat Easy Not Easy At All

Please comment on specific problems :

2. As a new or previous user, how easy was it to navigate AlphaCom?

- Easy Somewhat Easy Not Easy At All

Please comment on specific problems :

3. Would recommend using AlphaCom for future e-PD events?

- Yes No

Content

1. Was 3 hours generally enough time to read the classroom dynamics study?

- Yes No

2. How interesting did you find the study?

- Very Interesting Interesting Somewhat Interesting Not Very Interesting

3. How relevant did you find the study to LBS?

- Very Relevant Relevant Somewhat Relevant Not Very Relevant

Comments:

Pilot Information and Instructions

1. Generally speaking, the background information, details about the participant's role, and instructions for (a) reading the report and (b) subscribing to the e-discussion on AlphaPlus were:

- Sufficient Somewhat Sufficient Not Sufficient

Comments:

E-Discussion

1. Participation in the e-discussion was:

- Active and Engaging Sufficient to Hold My Interest Generally Lacking

2. The 2-week time frame allocated for the discussion was:

- Adequate Somewhat Adequate Not Adequate

Suggestions for a better time frame:

3. The facilitation of the e-discussion was:

- Very Satisfactory Satisfactory Somewhat Satisfactory Not Satisfactory

Suggestions for improved facilitation:

4. Check off ways e-PD could be used:

- larger scale reading and response activities
- exploring issues related to professional development
- mini-digest (posting summaries/reviews of reports/articles and providing web links)
- more structured PD activities
- planning PD events

Other _____

5. Suggestions for topics for e-discussion:

6. Overall, I feel the potential for e-PD using AlphaCom is:

Very Promising Promising Somewhat Promising Not Promising

7. Additional comments/observations:

Please contact me by e-mail or phone if you have any problems with the e-survey form.
Thanks again.

Dee Goforth

Tel: (705) 673-0692

E-mail: goforth@ican.net

Appendix 4 – Contact Letter

Greetings everyone,

I want to welcome you as a group to this pilot project. So far we have seventeen practitioners from seven colleges committed to participating. We're still waiting to hear from one other college that just received notice of the pilot. However we thought we'd better get rolling. Below are three pieces of important information related to the pilot.

Time Slot:

The majority of participants preferred the third time slot and one college could only participate in the third time slot. The pilot therefore will officially run from Monday, January 12 to Friday, January 30. If any of you cannot participate in this time slot, please let me know.

Materials:

I will be sending out a package of materials later this week. It will include the report and instructions for:

- reading the report
- participating in the pilot
- registering on AlphaCom, and
- logging on to the discussion group.

Those of you who are not registered with AlphaCom should try to register right away. The package will also include a list of participants.

Facilitation:

The discussion on AlphaCom will be facilitated by Bob Smith from Sir Sandford Fleming College and myself. Bob is a very experienced and creative classroom teacher who is also an excellent facilitator. Bob and I are really looking forward to January when this pilot gets underway.

I have one final request. Could you please acknowledge you have received this message to ensure that my e-mail list is complete and accurate? Thanks.

If you have any questions at any time, please contact me. Otherwise, I'll be in touch with you during the week prior to the pilot.

Appendix 5 – E-PD Activity Checklist

- Conduct a survey or consult with the appropriate network(s) to identify practitioners' PD needs/interests and the best time for a PD activity.
- Ensure that the announcement of the PD activity is sent to a key contact person at each program location.
- Match the number of participants to the type of e-PD, e.g., if intense discussion is involved, keep the numbers small.
- Ensure ample time is provided for the activity. If an in-depth discussion is involved, consider a 3 to 4 week timeframe.
- Compile a participant list and an e-mail address list.
- Make sure that documents which must be read in advance are distributed to all participants well ahead of the e-PD event itself.
- Provide an information package for participants clearly outlining the expectations for their participation and how much time that participation will involve.
- Provide support for registering on AlphaCom (or other platform) and subscribing to the discussion.
- Use two facilitators to guide the discussion in the event of a technology failure or illness. One facilitator should be an LBS practitioner.
- Set a clear start date for discussion.
- Ask participants to introduce themselves. Provide specific instructions if necessary.
- Clarify expectations with participants at the beginning of the discussion.
- If necessary, check in with individual participants by e-mail.
- Provide summaries of discussion periodically to help clarify ideas and/or set new direction.
- Attach related documents as needed.
- Ask participants to complete an electronic evaluation of the e-PD activity. Specify how the evaluation form is to be completed – individually or as a group.
- Share evaluation findings with the participants.
- Write up a summary report to share with other LBS practitioners in the field.
- Use report to plan further PD activities.