



Learning Challenges Webinar  
Part 2 – Strategies for the Classroom

For Adult Literacy/ Employment Practitioners

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E-Channel

Welcome to Learning Challenges Part 2 – Strategies for the Classroom

My name is Sara Gill and I will be your facilitator.

As mentioned in part 1, this webinar is part of the 2016-2017 Online Community of Practice Webinar Series. The Online Community of Practice is in its second year. It is organized by a committee of the Learning Networks of Ontario and is being organized this year by Literacy Link South Central and supported by Contact North. I am very thankful to have Sarah Stocker with us today from Contact North to provide technical support.

Everyone will be muted throughout the session so that we are not affected by background noise.

If you have a question or comment please type it into the text chat – both Sarah and I will look regularly to see if there are any to share and respond to. We can also give you the microphone so that you can add a comment or ask a question. In this case, please click on the raised hand button. You will be given the microphone. You can press the control button to turn the mic on to speak.

The session is being recorded for future playback.

There are 3 documents that you will need for this session – either in digital or hardcopy format. They are available as handouts and will be sent after the session as well.

1. Learning Challenges Strategies
2. Direct Instruction Examples
3. Learning Challenges Strategy Worksheet (for LBS)

## Introductions

A little about me...

What do you want to get from this training?

\*\*\*First – please answer a quick poll to identify where participants are coming from – whether Literacy and Basic Skills, Employment Services, Ontario Works or Other Community Partner.

As I am introducing myself I encourage you share in the text chat what you are hoping to learn from this training. If there are things that I don't touch on I will try to respond by way of email.

For those that maybe were not with us last week, I am the Executive Director of Adult Basic Education Association which is the Learning Network in Hamilton. I have been with the network for 14 years. In those years I was primarily an academic assessor and lead trainer. In that time I have specialized in understanding and assessing learning challenges in adult learners.

I developed the Learning Challenges Assessment Tool for Adult Literacy Learners in 2005. It has since undergone several revisions and has quite recently been updated to correspond to the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework and Essential Skills. The Learning Challenges Pre-Screen that we discussed last week is one piece of that assessment. At this point this assessment is available for use only through the Learning Networks of Ontario. However, there does seem to be some interest in opening up the most recent version with literacy practitioners across the

province. I will be sending out further details later this fall via the networks to get a sense of interest for the training.



## Part 1 Agenda

1. What are Learning Disabilities and Learning Challenges?
2. Learning Challenges Characteristics
3. Learning Challenges Pre-Screen
4. Learning Challenges - Examples and Markers
5. Factors to Consider

Before we move into strategies, are there any questions or comments about last week's session and the content we covered?



## Objectives - Part 2

At the end of this session you will have a better understanding of

- learning strategies, accommodations and assistive technologies for learners with learning challenges
- direct instruction and how to use it with learners
- specific strategy development



## Agenda

1. Strategies, Accommodations and Assistive Technologies
2. Direct Instruction
3. Strategy Development Exercise
4. Further Resources

## Learning Strategies

In general you want to consider

- rapport
- constantly assess and adapt
- constant feedback
- multiple explanations

a. Rapport - It is very important to develop a trusting relationship with your learner. They need to be comfortable with you so that they will share important information and provide feedback on what is working and what isn't.

b. Constantly assess and adapt

Learning challenges are not constant or consistent. Learners will have on and off days. You need to watch, ask questions and adapt. What might work one day might not work the next.

c. Constant feedback - discuss strategies on an ongoing basis and build it into the routine

d. Multiple explanations - an explanation that seems clear to you may not be to your learner. You will need to explain things in different ways and using different learning styles.



## Learning Strategies Defined

**Learning Strategies**  
are specific techniques that can be customized  
to fit a learner's strengths and learning style

**Definition**  
[def-uh-nish-uh n]

For example

- phonological awareness training like rhyming, blending, etc.) for learners with visual processing challenges
- Another example is a running record which is keeping a written or oral record of lessons for review for learners with organizational processing challenges

What is important here in terms of the classroom is that these techniques could be helpful to all learners but are really critical for those with learning challenges.



# Learning Strategies Defined

## Learning Accommodations

are considerations made for the learner that take nothing away from the skill being learned, but accommodate their special needs

**Definition**  
[def-uh-nish-uh n]

For example

- allowing a learner with auditory processing challenges to use an empty room to work
- Or checking and possibly changing the lighting in the classroom for learners with visual processing challenges



# Learning Strategies Defined

## Assistive Technologies

are accommodations that utilize technological resources

## Definition

[def-uh-nish-uh n]

For example

- A word processor helps with handwriting issues and has tools like spell check, grammar check, templates, etc.
- word prediction software suggests words a learner might want to use based on the first few letters
- or
- speech recognition software allows learner to dictate what they want to write



## Learning Strategies

- Instructional Approaches/Class Culture
- General Learning Strategies
- Learning Strategies for Learning Styles
- Strategies for Specific Challenges
- An Introduction to Assistive Technology
- Strategies for Other Factors
- Self-Awareness/Self-Direction
- Further Education/Training Goals
- Employment Considerations

There are many sections or lists of strategies in the handout. It is here for you as a download and it will also be emailed after the session.

The sections include...

I'm going to take you through the sections and pick out a few from each to highlight.

I invite you to use the text chat or put up your hand to add a comment as we go through some examples. Have you used this before? Do you have a strategy that you have used before with success? Let's learn from each other.



# Learning Strategies

Instructional Approaches/Class Culture

- a. Factors that contribute to achievement
- b. Active listening
- c. Create opportunities for success
- d. Consistent approach
- e. Define purpose
- f. Customize the environment
- g. Create a learning community



a. Factors that Contribute to achievement

Program or Instructor Factors include

- Small class size
- Individualized instruction
- A willingness of the instructor to use a variety of instructional techniques in all learning styles
- Understanding of learning strengths

Learner factors include

- self-determination
- The ability to set goals
- An understanding of their strengths and challenges
- A positive attitude towards learning
- And a positive belief in themselves

b. Active Listening

Listen carefully to what your learner says and value their opinion. They are an expert when it comes to their learning and can provide critical feedback around your

instructional approaches. This type of feedback should be built into the routine of the class so it doesn't get missed.

c. Create opportunities for success

Learners with learning challenges often have low self-esteem and self-confidence and have had negative learning experiences in the past. It's important to show the learner that they can be successful. Do this by starting the learner at a place where they will experience initial success – like with a strength area. Then increase complexity or change competencies to ones that are more challenging. When learners succeed, they can attribute their success to their own efforts and hard work. This can create internal motivation to continue and succeed.

d. Consistent approach

Consistency is important for many of us. However, for learners with learning challenges, consistency and clarity become much more important. The class should be overtly structured by times of day, days of the week etc. so that they can prepare for what is coming and know what is expected of them.

e. Define purpose

This is built into the OALCF but it's an important reminder to connect what a person is learning with why they are learning it. Explain why the skills they are working on are important for their goal pathway. For example, if a learner is working on grammar exercises and they are transitioning into credit studies, connect that skill to the tasks they will be performing later – for example, to proper essay writing in Grade 12 English. If a learner is working on skill development in math – say basic operations – and they are on the apprenticeship path – highlight how they will be using that on the job through the Essential Skills profile for that job.

f. Customize the environment

No need to delve into a big construction project here, but it's important to think about the learning environment and culture and whether it meets the needs of learners with learning challenges. A learner may need lots of distractions to stay motivated or they may need silence and little visual stimulus. So is there a way for this to happen? Maybe grouping some learners who like to engage in discussion and allowing others to work more independently or with earphones on, for example. Learners with visual processing challenges may need to sit closer to a window for natural light.

g. Create a learning community

Adult learners need a support network. Some may not have this at home. It's important to create a sense of community in the classroom. Consider things like putting up artwork, having a social space, having the learners design or consult on some of the classroom/social

spaces.

# Learning Strategies

## General Learning Strategies

- a. Lesson closure
- b. Self-reflection/Learning Log
- c. Frequent review
- d. Skill/task dissection
- e. Running record
- f. Clear writing

a. Lesson closure

Be sure to debrief at the end of a lesson. Leave time to review what was learned and try one more example. That way you will know if they are having difficulties.

b. Self-reflection – essentially learning how to learn. Encourage your learner to think about and better understand how they learn. This can be done by asking them how they approached a task, whether it worked or not and what strategies could have been used. This goes along with a learning log where the learner would take notes or comment on which strategies and accommodations are helpful and which are not.

c. Frequent review

This may seem obvious but learners with learning challenges typically have difficulties with short term memory and remembering concepts. Begin each section with a review of the last to determine whether to reteach or introduce new concepts.

d. Skill/Task Dissection – break down a task into parts or sequences to make it easier to learn.

ESKARGO is an excellent resource for this to understand the underlying skills for task completion. ESKARGO is Embedded Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes

Reference Guide for Ontario – CESBA, 2012. If you have not looked at this resource before it's available at [www.lbspractitionertraining.com](http://www.lbspractitionertraining.com)

- e. Running Record – Ask the learner to keep a written or oral record of lessons where they record the main concepts for review.
  
- f. Clear Writing – use clear, concise language and design to teach, give directions and in the design of your activities. These are things like using bullet points, taking out unnecessary words, using common language and design components such as using 1.5 spacing, 12 point font and a clear font without italics.

A shameless plug – the Learning Networks of Ontario offer a 12 week online Clear Writing course. For more information please visit [www.learningnetworks.ca](http://www.learningnetworks.ca)



# Learning Strategies

Learning Strategies for Learning Styles

- a. Visual Learners
- b. Auditory Learners
- c. Kinesthetic Learners



## Visual Learners

- use charts or diagrams to explain or present ideas
- enjoy subject-related puzzles and games
- like books with pictures to accompany text
- make use of films, videos, overheads, slides, etc. to assist in learning
- show learning through pictures, posters, collages, etc.
- use highlighters to assist learning
- learn best using concrete examples: maps, globes, models, photos, etc.
- benefit from using computer programs

## Auditory Learners

- vocalize ideas as they are written down
- discuss to learn and retain concepts and ideas
- talk through ideas and solutions
- learn best using poetry, music, songs, etc.
- benefit from debates, word games, tutorials, seminars, and group assignments
- use audio/visual media - CD's, DVD's, etc.
- collect information through verbal strategies - interviews, questionnaires, surveys,

etc.

### Kinaesthetic Learners

- need to be an active participant in learning
- use concrete materials to assist learning (hands-on learning)
- learn best by using role-play, charades, group activities, demonstrations, and presentations
- benefit from field trips, interviews, questionnaires, etc. to enhance learning
- enjoy subject-related games and puzzles
- need opportunities to move around



## Learning Strategies

Strategies/ Accommodations for Learners with Visual Processing Challenges

- a. Communication – give step-by-step verbal and written directions
- b. Reading – use a structured phonics program to increase reading vocabulary
- c. Writing - break words into syllables or chunks
- d. Math – use graph paper
- e. Accommodations - check lighting

For this next section I will highlight a few examples of the specific strategies by processing challenge area. I encourage you to spend some time with the full strategy list and highlight ones that you think could work for specific learners.

Here are some examples of strategies and accommodations for learners with visual processing challenges.

- a. For Communication - Learners with visual processing challenges typically have good auditory processing skills. Give step-by-step verbal and written instructions.
- b. In terms of Reading – for decoding, use a structured phonics program to increase reading vocabulary – these learners will have difficulty remembering “sight” words so it’s important that they develop their decoding skills in order to sound out difficult words.
- c. For writing – again, phonics-based approaches will be key here, one example is to have the learner break the word up into syllables to hear the chunks in words
- d. In math – use graph paper to help with alignment or working in columns – this can be very difficult for this learner
- e. Accommodation – check the lighting in the room – learners with visual processing challenges will likely be very sensitive to fluorescent light – natural

light decreases the contrast they see and can help relax their visual field to allow them to take in more visual information like text on a page



## Learning Strategies

Strategies/ Accommodations for Learners with Auditory Processing Challenges

- a. Communication – give visual directions
- b. Reading – use a whole word approach
- c. Writing – use word patterns/families
- d. Math – colour code steps of a math problem
- e. Accommodations – visual aids



Here are some examples of strategies and accommodations for learners with auditory processing challenges.

- a. For Communication – learners with auditory processing challenges typically have very good visual processing skills – give visual directions as much as possible and give oral directions slowly and repeat them
- b. In terms of Reading – a phonics program may be somewhat helpful but more than likely, using a whole word approach will work better for these learners – for example, having them read their own stories or dictate stories in their own words – then have the learner copy it out and have them focus on the shape of words to remember spellings
- c. For writing – use word patterns or families – again this focuses on the similar look of words
- d. In math – have the learner use different colours for different steps in math problems to provide a visual pattern to remember
- e. Accommodation – use visual aids (pictures, graphs, classroom signage) for the learner to reference



## Learning Strategies

Strategies/ Accommodations for Learners with Organizational Processing Challenges

- a. Communication - use a timetable for lessons
- b. Reading - use pre-reading questions
- c. Writing - teach printing explicitly
- d. Math - practice with columns
- e. Accommodations - routine

Here are some examples of strategies and accommodations for learners with organizational processing challenges.

- a. For Communication – directions will likely need to be repeated and given in multiple formats (oral and written) – using a timetable for lessons works well
- b. In terms of Reading – use pre-reading questions (for example, what is the text about? What is the purpose of reading?) and discuss the format of the text
- c. For writing – it’s very possible that these learners will have difficulty with fine motor skills like writing - teach letter formation – give the learner letter charts to reference and teach printing and even cursive writing explicitly
- d. In math – these learners may also benefit from using graph paper and practicing working in columns to solve math problems
- e. Accommodation – keep to a routine – help the learner make and keep to a schedule



## Learning Strategies

Assistive Technology Examples

- Text to speech (ex. NaturalReader)
- Speech recognition (ex. Dragon NaturallySpeaking)
- Word prediction programs (ex. iReadWrite for Apple)
- Word processor (ex. MS Word)



Let's face it, apps are cool. There are lots of things that your learners are likely already using – from calculators, to online calendars to autofill and spell check. What you want to consider when looking at adding assistive devices or technology is will it integrate into programming seamlessly and, do you and your learner have the time it takes to learn how to use it effectively.

If you are not already subscribed to both the Contact North and AlphaPlus newsletters, I highly recommend it. As our technological support organizations, they oftentimes highlight various online tools, apps and devices that can be helpful for all learners. You may find there is something you want to try with learners with learning challenges.

A few examples of assistive technology include

- Text to speech software or optical character recognition where the computer reads the text for the learner
- Speech recognition systems allow a learner to dictate what they want to say and the computer then writes it for them.
- Word prediction programs predict the next word that the learner may want to

use. The learner types the first letter and the program starts to offer words. This is built into smartphones but can be integrated into word processing software as well.

- d. Word processors can be used for many things – they have spell and grammar check, you can enlarge the print if needed, change the background, increase spacing, etc. All tools that can be very helpful for learners with learning challenges. What is important here is that they are giving direct instruction on how to manipulate their documents for their benefit



# Learning Strategies

Strategies for Other Factors

- a. Attention
- b. Memory
- c. Personal/Social



For attention, it is important to discuss individual attention strategies that they have developed to focus – that may mean they have to play with a pen, tap their foot or listen to music, or they may need a quiet space (both from auditory and visual distractions). Also, have them monitor their attention throughout the day to find their high and low attention points – then you can make their schedule around when they are most alert.

Mnemonics can be very handy for memory issues. Using a trick or rhyme can help them remember certain concepts or rules. Lots of repetition is needed and instructions need to be clear and short. Here, using multi-sensory and multi-learning style strategies works well to reinforce learning.

For personal and social strategies, it may be beneficial to look into wrap around referrals – is there a support group they can attend? Non-verbal cues may need to be taught explicitly. Also, model positive self-talk when they are learning. Far too often learners with learning challenges get down on themselves very quickly and may give up. An example of positive self-talk is something like, “this is a difficult skill and I’m making progress. If I keep up a good effort and use my strategies I’ll get there.” This self-talk can combat low self-esteem and puts them in control of their learning.



## Learning Strategies

Self-Awareness/Self-Direction

- Self-reflection
- Making connections
- Practical strategies for independence

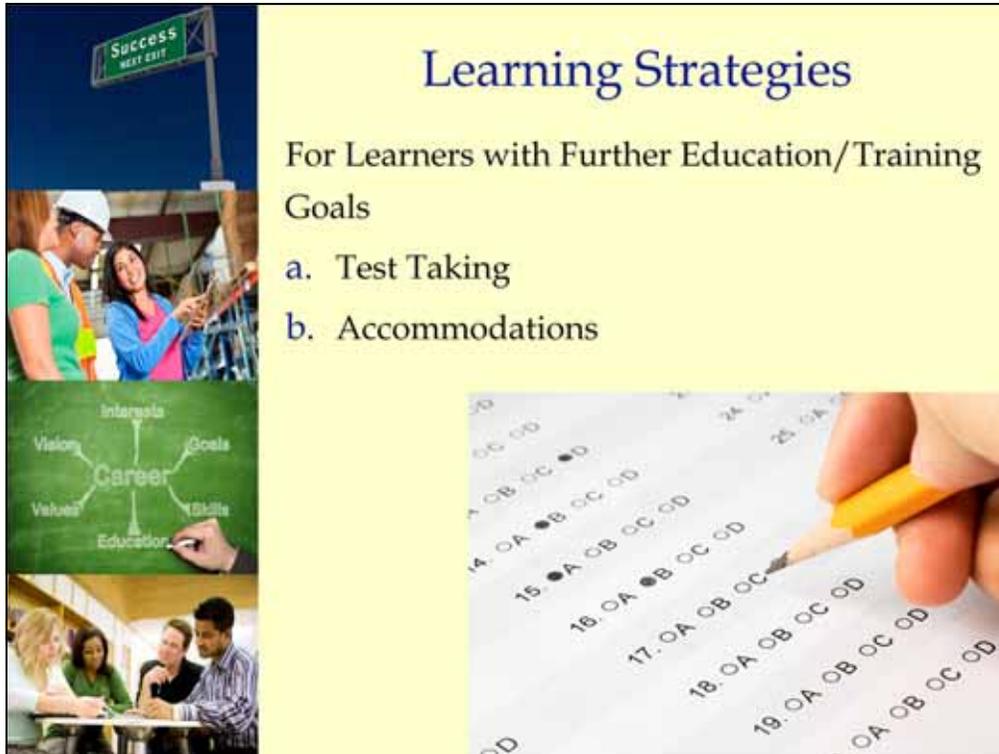


These go hand in hand with the OALCF competency of Manage Learning and Engaging with Others.

For self-reflection – encourage learners to think about the ideas they have about themselves and the messages they have received from others in order to challenge them. They need to analyze the barriers they face both by external and internal forces. They way they can work to make both more positive to move forward.

Making connections is important. Learners need to relate to others in the class and work to understand different perspectives. Developing the ability to work as part of a team and understand personal and team strengths is important for interpersonal development.

Practical strategies to increase independence include things like helping learners work on how to find information, learning to question to understand other perspectives and to communicate their needs. Help them to develop decision making and problem-solving skills.



## Learning Strategies

For Learners with Further Education/Training Goals

- Test Taking
- Accommodations

For those learners moving on to credit, apprenticeship or post-secondary, it's important that they prepare to take tests.

Some strategies include talking about the different types of test questions – for example, multiple-choice, true/false, short answer or essay questions) and the approaches they can take with each. Also, encouraging them to jot down a few formulas, facts and figures that may help them during the test. Also, to skim over the test first to get a feel for what is on it so they can plan their time accordingly and teach them about budgeting their time between the different types of test questions.

Most secondary and post-secondary institutions will offer specific accommodations if the learner has a formal diagnosis and documentation. However, it's important to research the requirements before applying. Before they apply, they should make an appointment with an admissions specialist to see what supports would be available to them.



## Learning Strategies

Employment Considerations

- a. General pre-employment strategies
- b. Employment strategies
- c. Strategies for employers

This is where it will be important to have the learner develop a relationship with an employment service – not only at exit from LBS, but during programming.

For pre-employment, career exploration may be needed to determine a goodness of fit between the learners' interests, skills and accommodations needed at work. Specific skill development for the employment goal will be key to helping the learner transition successfully. Essential Skills profiles are a very good way to understand what skills are needed on the job and which ones could be worked on as part of the learner plan. Essential skills profiles can be found on the [JobBank.gc.ca](http://JobBank.gc.ca) website under Explore Careers – Education and Job Requirements and looking under the Canada tab. The learner will also have to work on their self-advocacy skills so that they can articulate their strengths but also articulate what accommodations they may need on the job.

In terms of employment, learners should ask for written job descriptions and expectations with timelines. The biggest issue for employment strategies is whether or not to disclose their learning challenge to their potential or current employer. There is a pro/con list on page 160 that might be helpful when discussing this issue with your learners/clients.

There is some information there as well for employers. You are welcome to share

this information with employers if you think it could be helpful. There are some suggestions for each of the processing challenge areas for employer consideration. This could open up a good conversation to make the employment environment one where they can grow and succeed.



## Direct Instruction

1. Explanation
2. Modeling
3. Self-Instruction
4. Practice
5. Provide Feedback
6. Implementation

Most of us use learning strategies automatically to fit our needs. We use verbal rehearsal to remember someone's telephone number, or we remember musical notes by saying "Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge". However, people with learning challenges do not necessarily use these strategies automatically. Direct instruction is the explicit teaching of a learning strategy or accommodation.

It involves six steps

1. Explanation – what is the intention of the strategy or accommodation?
2. Modeling – how is the strategy used effectively? (use the learner's current work)
3. Self-instruction – have the learner explain the strategy and they use it
4. Practice – provide various opportunities to practice the strategy on different tasks
5. Provide and get feedback – provide affirmative, constructive feedback and ask the learner if the strategy is working well and how they are using it – are there changes needed?

6. Implementation – encourage the learner to report independent and routine use of the strategy

This method is also very good for teaching new academic skills. I'd like to take you through a concrete example of this. I will be using the Direct Instruction Examples document.



In the handouts there is a strategy development exercise. This is a follow-up activity to this webinar that will help to solidify some of the tools and strategies that we have discussed. I'm going to take you through the exercise and I encourage you to take it offline and work through it on your own or with your instructor team. This would be a great activity for a staff meeting or training follow-up.



## Learning Strategies

The most important elements to use in the classroom for learners with learning challenges are

- a. use direct instruction of learning strategies
- b. teach material in small chunks
- c. repeat, repeat, repeat
- d. teach material in a variety of ways
- e. help the learner learn through meaning or association
- f. develop a structure or routine



## Interpersonal Strategies

- a. meet with your learner in a private space if possible
- b. avoid using jargon
- c. listen to your learner and do not interrupt
- d. keep note-taking to a minimum – keep it conversational
- e. ask open-ended questions



## Bringing it All Together

1. Learning Challenges Characteristics  
Acts as a helpful reminder
2. Learning Challenges Pre-Screen  
Help to determine if challenges are present
3. Definitions/Markers  
Help to determine the type of challenge
4. Strategies Document  
Identify specific strategies for the learner

So just to review, we have discussed a variety of tools that will hopefully be helpful when supporting learners or clients with learning challenges.

The Learning Challenges Characteristics document is a helpful reminder of the main characteristics (both general and related to reading, writing and math) that you could see in your learners or clients.

You can choose to use the Learning Challenges Pre-Screen by incorporating it into your intake, assessment or ongoing assessment processes. It can help you to see if there are factors that need to be dealt with (and if outside referrals need to be made) and whether the learner may have learning challenges.

The definitions and markers document defines and explains Visual, Auditory and Organizational Processing Challenges. You may need to observe and discuss with your learner for a time to determine what type of challenges they may be facing.

Once you have an idea of the challenges your learner may be facing you can use the strategies document to identify some strategies and accommodations that might be helpful. This will have to be an ongoing process with constant monitoring and discussion.

Utilizing these materials can help strengthen your learning challenges tool kit to help learners overcome their barriers, find strategies that are helpful in class and beyond to help them reach their goals.



## Further Resources

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

[www.ldao.ca](http://www.ldao.ca)

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

[www.ldac.ca](http://www.ldac.ca)

Copian - Connecting Canadians in Learning

Library - <http://library.copian.ca/>

I encourage you to visit the Learning Disabilities of Ontario and Canada websites, as well as the Copian library. These sites have a wealth of information in terms of research, characteristics, stories and project work.



## Evaluation

An evaluation will be sent to you shortly following the webinar. Please take a few minutes to complete the evaluation.



Similar to last week, an evaluation will be sent after today's webinar by email. Thank you to those that completed the evaluation for last week's session. The resources shared will also be made available as well as the slide deck.



## Questions/Comments

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Ontario's employment and training network

Images taken from Google Images

Are there any questions or comments about today's or last week's session? I'm happy to address them now either from the text chat or please let us know if you would like the microphone.

Thank you so much for attending today. Please feel free to connect with me by email if you have questions after the session. I encourage you to look for additional webinars being offered through the Online Community of Practice webinar series and thank you again to Sarah Stocker from Contact North as well as Literacy Link South Central for coordinating these sessions.