

The ESL & Get SET Dilemma



Thursday, October 15, 2026 | 2 – 3:30pm



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



YOUR HOST



PRESENTER Robyn Cook-Ritchie is the Executive Director at Laubach Literacy Ontario (LLO). Her consulting company RCR Consulting has focused on adult literacy for the past two decades working with literacy organizations across the province on research and development projects and practitioner training. She also coordinates the Literacy and Basic Skills, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada, and English as a Second Language programs at the Grand Erie District School Board. She completed a degree in Sociology/Anthropology and followed up with a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree. Although her educational focus was law, she "fell" into — and in love with — the adult learning and literacy field almost 30 years ago and never looked back.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



STATEMENT OF RECOGNITION

While we meet today on a virtual platform, let's take a moment to recognize, respect and acknowledge the importance of the lands we occupy and from which we benefit.

Today, let's reaffirm our commitment and responsibility to improve relationships between nations -- and our own understanding of local Indigenous peoples and their cultures.

Let's remind ourselves that, wherever we are, we live on the ancestral and unceded territory of Inuit, Métis, and First Nations people.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



ABOUT POP UP PD FOR LITERACY EDUCATORS

- free webinar series developed by Ontario's Get SET Regional Networks & the Provincial Support Organizations for Literacy
- supports Get SET practitioners with presentations on topics important to them
- English language webinars presented for Get SET practitioners annually since 2015-2016
- **all** webinar presentations, recording links & transcripts here:
[Pop Up PD Resources for LBS Educators](#)
- webinar topic ideas welcome at: e-channel@contactnorth.ca



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



PLEASE COMPLETE THE **EVALUATION** AT THE END OF THIS WEBINAR

Your feedback is vital!

It helps us to plan future Pop Up PD sessions and is an integral part of our reporting to Ministry. These evaluations help demonstrate the value of, and demand for, Pop Up PD in our professional community.

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts... and for helping us continue to deliver informative webinars like this one.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



TODAY'S SESSION

1. Setting the Context
2. Understanding Adult ESL/FSL and LINC/CLIC Programming in Ontario
3. Get SET or Language Training? Identifying Learner Needs
4. Supporting Multilingual Learners in Get SET
5. Referrals, Partnerships and Navigating Service Gaps
6. Wrap-up, Resources and Questions



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



SETTING THE CONTEXT POLL

Which of the following best describes your program's experience?

1. We regularly serve learners whose first language is not English or French.
2. We occasionally serve these learners.
3. We frequently receive referrals for learners who need ESL/FSL instruction.
4. We have limited ESL/FSL services available in our community.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



UNDERSTANDING **ADULT ESL/FSL AND LINC/CLIC** PROGRAMMING IN ONTARIO **POLL**

How many people feel they understand the
adult language programming system in
Ontario?

Thumbs up for yes



Thumbs down for no



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



What is ESL/FSL?

ESL — English as a Second Language

Instruction that helps adults develop English-language skills for everyday life, work, education and community participation.

Funded by the Ministry of Immigration, Training, Labour and Skills Development (MLITSD).

FSL — French as a Second Language

Instruction that helps adults develop French-language skills for similar purposes, including communication in francophone environments.

Funded by the Ministry of Immigration, Training, Labour and Skills Development (MLITSD).

Programs may teach listening, speaking, reading and writing, with content adapted to learner goals and language levels.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



What is LINC/CLIC?

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada

- Federally funded English-language training for eligible adult newcomers
- Typically offered at no tuition cost to eligible participants
- Often includes settlement-related language learning
- French-language counterpart: CLIC

Important distinction

LINC/CLIC is a specific federally funded program. It is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)

Not every newcomer is eligible, and not every ESL class is a LINC class.

Programs may teach listening, speaking, reading and writing, with content adapted to learner goals and language levels.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



How is language training delivered?

In person

Classroom-based learning with face-to-face interaction, instructor feedback and opportunities to practise conversation.

Online or blended

Live online, independent online or a combination of classroom and remote activities; digital access matters.

Full time or part time

Daytime, evening or other schedules, depending on the provider; learners may need flexibility for work or caregiving.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Who is eligible?

Factors

- Immigration or citizenship status
- Age and Ontario residency requirements
- Language assessment or placement
- Program capacity, location and intake dates
- Specific provider or funding requirements

Key cautions

LINC/CLIC generally targets eligible permanent residents and protected persons; Canadian citizens and many temporary residents are not eligible.

Provincial ESL/FSL has different criteria and includes Canadian citizens.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Understanding CLB and NCLC

CLB

Canadian Language Benchmarks: a 12-level framework describing adult English-language proficiency.

NCLC

Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens: the corresponding 12-level framework for French.

1–4

**Basic proficiency
Stage 1**

5–8

**Intermediate proficiency
Stage 2**

9–12

**Advanced proficiency
Stage 3**

CLB/NCLC describe language ability in reading, writing, speaking and listening.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE TRAINING IN ONTARIO

Program	Purpose	General eligibility	Assessment	Access
ESL English as a Second Language/ FSL	Develop English/French listening, speaking, reading and writing skills for everyday life, employment and further education.	Generally, adults whose first language is not English. Publicly funded eligibility depends on immigration or residency status, age and the provider's funding rules.	Formal language assessment and placement using CLB for English or NCLC for French, typically through a designated assessment service.	MLITSD funded service providers. Primarily school boards and a few other approved providers. All CLB Stages
LINC Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada/ CLIC	Provide federally funded English/French-language training to help eligible newcomers settle and participate in Canadian society. The French-language equivalent is CLIC.	Generally, permanent residents and protected persons, subject to IRCC requirements. Canadian citizens and most temporary residents are not eligible for federally funded LINC/CLIC.	Formal language assessment and placement using CLB for English or NCLC for French, typically through a designated assessment service.	IRCC-funded service providers (community based, school board, college). CLB Stage 1
Get SET Skills, Education and Training/ parcours Réussite	Develop foundational competencies needed for employment, apprenticeship, secondary or postsecondary education, and greater independence.	Generally, Ontario residents aged 18 or older with foundational skills needs and an appropriate learner goal, subject to provincial eligibility requirements. Some 16–17-year-olds may qualify under specified conditions.	OALCF-based assessment of foundational skills, learner goals, existing competencies and learning needs. Not a formal ESL/FSL language proficiency assessment.	MLITSD funded service. providers (community-based, school board, college)



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



GET SET OR LANGUAGE TRAINING? IDENTIFYING LEARNER NEEDS

ESL/FSL and LINC/CLIC help learners develop language proficiency.

Get SET helps learners develop foundational skills.

The programs can complement one another, but they serve different primary purposes.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Scenario A: An internationally trained tradesperson has strong technical and numeracy skills but limited English proficiency. They want to improve workplace communication and prepare for employment.

Scenario B: A newcomer has functional conversational English but struggles to interpret workplace documents, complete forms and use digital tools.

Would Get SET, ESL/LINC, or a combination of services be most appropriate?

What additional information would you need?



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Program purpose

Get SET

Builds foundational skills for employment, apprenticeship, education and independence.

ESL and LINC

Develops English/French proficiency for communication, learning and participation.

Where they overlap

A learner may need both language development and foundational skills support.

What is the learner trying to achieve—and what support will help?



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Language Proficiency and Literacy: Different Needs

Strong first-language skills

May have advanced education, professional experience, strong literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

Primary need may be learning English/French vocabulary and communication.

Combined literacy & language needs

May have had limited access to schooling or literacy development in their first language.

May need foundational literacy support alongside second-language instruction.

Explore prior learning and strengths; never infer literacy levels from English/French proficiency alone.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Everyday Conversation vs. Goal-Specific Language

Everyday conversational language

Social interactions, greetings, shopping and casual conversations.

A learner may communicate confidently in familiar situations.

Employment, education & training language

Understanding safety instructions, technical vocabulary, forms, assignments and workplace expectations.

These tasks may require more precise language.

Conversational fluency does not automatically mean readiness for complex workplace or academic language tasks.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Look beyond conversational fluency

Language access

Can the learner understand instructions, engage in learning and demonstrate skills in the language of instruction?

Existing strengths

Explore prior education, work experience, first-language literacy and transferable skills.

Avoid assumptions

Limited English or French does not automatically mean limited literacy, numeracy or digital skills.

Assess the skill—not only the language used to demonstrate it.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Which pathway best fits?

Primarily language

Needs systematic English/French instruction → explore ESL/FSL or eligible LINC/CLIC.

Primarily foundational skills

Needs skill development for a clear goal and can participate meaningfully → assess Get SET suitability.

Both

Language and foundational needs → explore coordinated, parallel or sequenced supports.

Decision lens: goals + demonstrated skills + language access + eligibility + local options.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Questions to Guide Decisions

- What does the learner want to accomplish?
- What skills does the learner already have?
- Is the primary barrier understanding English/French, or performing the foundational skill?
- Can the learner meaningfully participate with appropriate instructional supports?
- Would specialized language training better address the learner's immediate needs?



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



SUPPORTING MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS IN GET SET

Maintain meaningful learning expectations while reducing unnecessary language barriers.

- Accessible environments
- Embedded language supports
- Digital tools



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Create an Accessible Learning Environment

Make the task clearer—not the thinking easier

Communicate clearly

Use plain language, short steps and one instruction at a time.

Show the task

Use visuals, demonstrations and authentic examples.

Check understanding

Ask learners to explain or demonstrate the next step.

Respect processing time

Pause, allow responses and connect to prior experience.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Build Language Supports Into Skills Instruction

Teach the words learners need to complete authentic tasks

Before the task

Pre-teach essential vocabulary and show an example.

During the task

Model, use sentence starters and practice together.

After the task

Repeat in new contexts and gradually remove supports.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Choose Digital Supports Deliberately

Useful tools have benefits—and limitations

Translation & visual dictionaries

Helpful for orientation; translations may miss context or technical meaning.

Text-to-speech / speech-to-text

Support access and expression; accuracy and assessment purpose matter.

AI comprehension supports

Can explain vocabulary or rephrase instructions; outputs require checking.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Learning Networks
of Ontario

Support Learning—Then Check Independent Skills

A practical decision for every instructional support

Ask first

What foundational skill are we teaching or assessing?

During learning

Provide appropriate language and digital supports.

During assessment

Use only supports permitted for the task; document what was used.

Reflect

Can the learner perform the target skill independently?



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



REFERRALS, PARTNERSHIPS AND **NAVIGATING** **SERVICE GAPS**

Helping learners access appropriate services,
particularly in underserved communities.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Learning Networks
of Ontario

Building Community Partnerships

Strong relationships help learners access the right services at the right time.

01 Connect with school boards

Identify adult ESL/FSL programs, contacts, eligibility and delivery options.

02 Engage community partners

Build relationships with settlement agencies and other local service providers.

03 Create two-way referral pathways

Agree on contact points, consent procedures and how referrals will be handled.

04 Coordinate complementary supports

Explore joint information sessions, shared planning and complementary learning pathways.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Access Is More Than Availability

A program may exist but still be inaccessible to the learner.

Transportation

Travel distance, cost, public transit schedules



Technology

Devices, connectivity, digital confidence and privacy



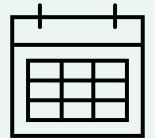
Childcare

Care responsibilities and available supports



Scheduling

Work shifts, class times, pace and attendance expectations



Ask: “What would make this option possible for you?” — then problem-solve together.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



When Language Learning Options Are Limited

Challenges in communities with limited ESL/FSL or LINC services

Geographic barriers

Few local programs; transportation and distance

Access barriers

Waitlists, schedules, eligibility and digital access

Competing needs

Employment, childcare and settlement responsibilities

Programming pressures

Get SET may be accessible but not the best instructional match

Limited availability does not eliminate the need for appropriate language instruction.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



When Local Language Programs Are Unavailable

Explore options without assuming Get SET can meet every language-learning need.

Map available services

Check nearby school boards, settlement agencies, regional providers and online ESL/FSL or LINC/CLIC options.

Identify practical alternatives

Consider distance learning, community-based conversation opportunities and supported access to regional programs.

Provide appropriate interim support

Help learners navigate referrals and build relevant foundational skills where Get SET eligibility and suitability are established.

Conversation practice and digital resources do not necessarily replace structured language instruction.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Turn Unmet Needs into Better Service Planning

Support individuals now while building evidence for community-level solutions.

1 Record the gap

Document the type of language support requested, general access barriers and unsuccessful referral outcomes using approved processes.

2 Look for patterns

Review recurring needs: location, language, class level, schedule, digital access and service eligibility.

3 Engage partners

Share aggregated findings with school boards, settlement organizations, regional networks and funders to explore coordinated responses.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



 **Learning Networks**
of Ontario

WRAP-UP, RESOURCES AND QUESTIONS



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



WRAP-UP, RESOURCES AND QUESTIONS

1. Not all multilingual learners require ESL/FSL instruction before participating in Get SET.
2. Language proficiency and foundational skills are related but distinct.
3. Appropriate instructional strategies can help multilingual learners participate successfully in Get SET.
4. Specialized ESL/FSL or LINC/CLIC programming may be necessary when language acquisition is the learner's primary need.
5. Strong referral relationships and knowledge of available services are essential, particularly in underserved communities.



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



ESL RESOURCES FOR LBS

<https://sites.google.com/laubach-on.ca/esl-resources/home>

Coming Soon
a new Course on



English Language Learners Toolkit

<https://sites.google.com/lleo.ca/resourcehub/curricula-and-toolkits/english-language-learners-toolkit?authuser=0>



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



Questions



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



THANK
YOU

MERCI

MIIGWETCH

Webinar resources: Pop Up PD Resources for [Get SET](#) Educators

Webinar evaluation: the link will automatically open when you exit the webinar



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators



POP UP PD
free webinars for
literacy educators

