

Literacy and Basic Skills

Frequently Asked Questions

What is LBS?

LBS stands for Literacy and Basic Skills

LBS

- is basic education for adults in the area of reading, writing and numeracy
- includes basic education in speaking/listening, computer and self-management/self-direction skills

LBS has

- 5 levels for each of these above areas
- 4 streams: Anglophone (English), Francophone, Native, and Deaf

What is literacy?

An international definition of literacy was established from the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS - 1994) study: "Literacy is the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential."

Is literacy an issue?

Both the IALS (1994) and the follow-up Adult Learning and Lifeskills Survey (ALLS-2003), found that 42% of all Canadians have difficulty with everyday literacy tasks.

What happens when you complete LBS Level 5?

Once you have completed Level 5 you are considered ready for Grade 10-12 level credit studies or equivalencies such as GED preparation or academic upgrading at community colleges. The length of time needed to finish LBS depends on the individual - their goals, pace of learning and the level at which they start.

Who can attend LBS classes?

Anyone over the age of 18 can attend an LBS program. Some programs may allow students over the age of 16 to attend. You should have some identification to prove your residency status in Ontario.

How do I know if LBS programs are right for me?

LBS programs are right for anyone who needs to improve their reading, writing or math skills. Even if you finished Grade 12 but feel that you have difficulty with basic skills, you can still participate in LBS classes.

Where can I find LBS classes?

LBS classes are available in every region of Ontario. Within each region there are often multiple providers. Go to the following site for a searchable database by location.
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/tcu/search.html>

Who offers LBS programs?

There are many different providers for LBS. In your area LBS may be provided by a school board, community college or community based program such as a literacy council or pre-employment program.

Who funds LBS?

The Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities (MTCU), which is a part of the Ontario provincial government. LBS is a part of the Employment Ontario umbrella of MTCU services.

How much does it cost to be a student in an LBS program?

Most LBS programs are free. Some programs may charge a small fee to register (less than \$25).

How many students are in an LBS class?

Class sizes vary (2 to 20+); some programs provide tutors who work 1 to 1 with students.

When can I take LBS classes?

Most LBS classes are continuous intake – you can start anytime. Note that some programs may close during the summer. Most LBS classes are offered during the day, but many locations also offer evening classes.

Are LBS programs full-time or part-time? Can I study at home?

Most LBS programs are offered on a full-time basis; some are offered on a part-time basis. Programs with tutors may be flexible in terms of when and where they can meet with students. There is one online LBS class – see “Can I study LBS on the Internet?” below.

What is the difference between LBS and adult high school credit programs?

There are two major differences

1. LBS programs help you achieve specific goals and acquire specific educational skills, whether related to employment, training or independence. High school credit programs are curriculum-directed (everybody studies the same thing).
2. LBS programs go up to Grade 9-10 level equivalency - you do not complete LBS with a Grade 12 equivalent diploma. High school credit programs work towards achieving a Grade 12 diploma or providing pre-requisite credits for college or university studies.

Can I take LBS classes to a Grade 12 level?

Community colleges in Ontario that offer LBS classes also have programs that bridge between LBS Level 5 and college-level studies. These programs act as a Grade 12 equivalent for purposes of entry into college programs and apprenticeship. These programs are generally referred to as Academic Upgrading (formerly known as OBS) or College and Career Preparation (C&CP) programs or Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) programs.

What is the difference between LBS and ESL?

LBS is for students who speak English as a first language. If English is not your first language but you have a high level of English speaking and listening skills you may be eligible to attend LBS classes.

Can I take LBS in French?

Yes, most regions in Ontario have LBS classes available in French.

What is a Learning Disability?

Learning disabilities refer to a variety of disorders that affect that acquisition, retention, understanding, organization, and/or use of verbal and/or non-verbal information (Learning Disability Association of Ontario, 2001). Learning disabilities are commonly evident when there is an unexpected underachievement – considering age, intelligence, and education – in one or more areas of learning (American Psychological Association, 2000).

Can LBS help me with learning disabilities?

Most LBS programs do not have specific classes for students with diagnosed learning disabilities, however, many instructors can help you increase your functional skills in literacy/numeracy and inform you of strategies and accommodations to help you manage learning disabilities.

Can I study LBS on the Internet?

The Learning Hub (www.learninghub.ca) offers online LBS classes. Alpharoute offers online LBS studies, however, you must be attending an LBS program to full access to this resource.

What commitment do I have to make when I attend an LBS class?

Whether you attend on a part-time or full-time basis, instructors are looking for you to make and commit to a schedule and specific goals.

What can I do after LBS?

Once you have completed LBS you will be ready for employment, training or higher level academic upgrading.

What is Employment Ontario?

Employment Ontario is a network for all of the employment, training and education services offered or funded through MTCU. This includes LBS programs.

If I am on Ontario Works, can I attend an LBS program?

Yes, and in most cases attending LBS classes can help you meet your participation agreement requirements.

If I am on Employment Insurance (EI), can I attend an LBS program?

Yes, but check to see how many hours you are approved by EI to attend. Some EI offices will only approve academic upgrading for less than 10 hours per week and other offices will approve training for more hours per week.

What is Second Career?

The Second Career strategy launched by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities pays for the training or education that Ontarians require to get a better job. It provides financial help up to \$28,000, or more in some cases, to pay for

- tuition
- living expenses
- help caring for dependents
- travel
- transportation
- disability supports
- other living and training costs
- books

Those who qualify may have some or all of these costs covered within the Second Career Strategy. In order to find out if you qualify for Second Career or any other government funding, all candidates must visit an Employment Ontario assessment centre for an assessment interview.

What is Ontario Skills Development?

Ontario Skills Development can help you with short-term training to build your skills and get a job. It can provide you with

- financial help for things like books and tuition fees
- better chances for finding a long-term job

You may qualify for the program if you

- are unemployed
- are eligible for Employment Insurance (EI), or were eligible within the past three years
- left work to care for a newborn or newly adopted child, and were eligible for Employment Insurance maternity or parental benefits within the past five years

What does a Learning Network do?

The main role of a Learning Network is to facilitate the Literacy Community Planning (LCP) process. Learning Networks function as a liaison between Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and local literacy providers as a group. They function to build partnerships and collaboration in the community between literacy providers and other community stakeholders. Learning Networks may also undertake a variety of other activities related to literacy, such as research, training or assessment services.

What are centralized educational assessment services?

Centralized educational assessment services are offered through one location. Agencies use this service for assessment and referrals for their clients. The benefit of centralized assessment is that agencies have one point of contact for client referrals. The Learning Networks are strategically placed to provide centralized educational assessment services because they are impartial, and they already facilitate community planning and are responsible for knowing all upgrading/training programs in their region.

What is the Educational Essential Skills Assessment (EESA)?

The EESA is a comprehensive initial assessment that identifies both literacy and essential skill levels directly related to client goal paths. This assessment results in a detailed referral pathway of all the steps needed for the client to reach his/her independence, education/training, and employment goals. Currently, this assessment is being used in parts of Ontario to identify upgrading needs of clients looking to access Second Career and Ontario Skills Development and adds support for these program applications.

What are Essential Skills?

The term Essential Skills, in Canada, is generally used to refer to the system developed by Human Resources & Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) as a comprehensive description of the range of skills which are “essential” for work, learning and life. This includes

- Reading Text
- Document Use
- Numeracy
- Writing
- Oral Communication
- Working with Others
- Continuous Learning
- Thinking Skills
- Computer Use

Do Learning Networks have classes?

No. However, every learning network can provide referral to all of the LBS programs in its region.

Who funds Learning Networks?

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Learning Networks are part of Employment Ontario umbrella of MTCU services.

What does LCP mean?

LCP stands for Literacy Community Planning. This is a process by which all of the literacy service providers in a region co-ordinate and plan services. This co-ordination culminates in an annual Literacy Service Plan (LSP).