

Annual Report | 2010



Mission & Values

Mission

AlphaPlus advances adult basic education through the smart use of readily-available information and learning technology. We do this by providing adult-education organizations access to information and learning technology tools, training, and consulting so they can teach more effectively and train their students to use everyday technology. In addition, AlphaPlus researches innovative learning technologies and practices, disseminates information, and provides forums for collaboration and the exchange of knowledge.

Organizational values

- Literacy is recognized as a life-enhancing set of skills, enabling people to fully participate in their communities and see life as full of possibility
- Adults who want to pursue basic education can choose from, and have fair and equitable access to a variety of options in order to meet their unique needs, culture and circumstances
- Learners and educators work together on a continuum of learning
- Technology is a means to an end - a medium for learning - not an end in itself
- Readily-available Web-based technology tools are used throughout AlphaPlus to model behaviour to the field and to enhance our own learning
- We value and encourage input from educators, learners, and decision-makers in designing everything we do

History

In 1998, AlphaPlus was created through the merging of “AlphaCom”, an electronic discussion forum for literacy educators and learners and “Alpha Ontario”, a Toronto Public Library project, which began in 1991, for adult literacy and immigrant language training educators. Continuing in the tradition of Alpha Ontario, AlphaPlus’ mandate was to provide information, resources, and support services to adult literacy and language training programs via educators working in Deaf, Native, Francophone, Anglophone, and second language learning communities in Ontario.

In 1999, AlphaPlus began its transition into Web-based training with the use of innovative online learning environments and content management systems such as AlphaRoute, Centra and Moodle. These programs informed the literacy community of the demand for online learning and paved the way for our current Web-based, information and learning technology focus.

Our current mandate is to research, evaluate, adapt, and assist in integrating information and learning technologies into practice to meet the emerging needs of educators, learners and decision-makers in the adult basic education field.

A Message from the Chair - Peter Rogers



AlphaPlus has undergone a great deal of change in the past year. In August, we welcomed a new Executive Director, Michael Coteau. With Michael taking the reins of our organization, our board has been able to refocus our strategic vision and strengthen our role in the Canadian adult literacy community.

In the upcoming year we have plans in place to revitalize the Board of Directors and create more active partnerships. AlphaPlus is working to ensure that we are closely connected with the Canadian adult literacy community so that we may more effectively serve educators, learners and decision-makers.

In order to practice what we preach, the board at AlphaPlus has been adopting technology into our meetings with the use of Web Savvy tools such as Skype. We have been diligent in modeling the skills that we provide training and support in, and that we know to be so important in our digital age.

The Board of Directors are all very excited about AlphaPlus' new strategic direction and look forward to sharing its successful outcomes in the coming year.

A Message from the Executive Director – Michael Coteau



Digital literacy is an essential 21st century skill; necessary to participate fully in our society. AlphaPlus aims to enhance the adult-education sector by serving as a bridge between literacy and technology for adult educators and their students. We are committed to providing adult-education organizations access to information and learning technology tools, training, and consulting so they can teach more effectively and train their students to use everyday technology.

As our concept of literacy evolves, so too must our approach to adult education. The literacy skills necessary to fully participate in society today are quite different from the skills that were needed even a decade ago. In considering technology's relationship with literacy, the medium is very much the message. Technology not only represents part of what we learn, it represents how we learn and how we apply all we have learned.

At AlphaPlus, we are constantly tapping into new ideas, monitoring trends, pursuing best practices, and researching the latest developments in technology in relation to adult education. As leaders, we enhance adult basic education through training and modeling the smart use of information and learning technologies.

I would like to thank the AlphaPlus staff for their hard work, which has advanced our organization. In 2010/2011, we look forward to providing training and support to adult basic educators and the Adult Literacy community as a whole.

2009-2010 Highlights

Communications

AlphaPlus Blog

The AlphaPlus Blog is a resounding success and has become a reliable source of news and information about adult literacy, technology and research for our field; educators and program coordinators tell us that it is an important resource in their daily work. In 2009-10 we had 6000 visitors to the site and 9000 page views.

AlphaPlus Tech Podcasts

The AlphaPlus Tech Podcasts are being very well received by the field – as one listener wrote “Great podcasts – very inspirational. Awesome use of technology – user-friendly, easy to understand, all the good stuff”.

E-News

Do you subscribe to our mailing list? If so, you are among almost two thousand subscribers who receive AlphaPlus’ e-News on a monthly basis. Since 2008, our electronic newsletter has allowed us to deliver the latest updates on our initiatives directly to your inbox. Our e-News is archived, giving you a quick and easy access to our past issues. There is always something new and interesting in our e-News articles. If you have not yet subscribed, please join us for free at www.alphaplus.ca!

Research

Index to Web Resources

The AlphaPlus Web Index has moved into Web 2.0 and is now available through the social bookmarking tool “Delicious”! Users of the Web Index can now take full advantage of social bookmarking; they can search, connect with and gather information from a wide community involved in adult basic education.

Pathfinders

In response to feedback from the field, two new pathfinders have been created: Essential skills and computer use and Successful online learning. These pathfinders aim at providing a snap shot of current resources on topics relevant to adult literacy practitioners. More resources are now at your fingertips!

Support

Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Initiative – Curriculum Development team

The Curriculum Development team was assembled in October 2008 to develop a new Curriculum Framework to meet the needs of Ontario learners in the 21st century. The team included members from all of the sectors, streams and major representative agencies in the literacy field in Ontario. AlphaPlus’ role, on the Curriculum Development team, was to conduct the research and analysis necessary to inform and support the work of the project, related to the use of computers and technology. The resultant work of this team was an elegantly simple, innovative, and relevant framework which will meet the needs of all adult learners.

2009-2010 Highlights

Tech Survey

In our effort to assist Literacy Basic Skills (LBS) agencies in evaluating their program's capacity to engage in online learning and training, AlphaPlus designed two surveys in collaboration with the Regional Networks and an Advisory Group representing the E-channel delivery agencies.

One survey allows individual educators to evaluate their own technology skills and the other survey is intended for agency administrators to evaluate the agency's technology infrastructure. The combined responses from the surveys will help LBS agencies evaluate the level of integration of technologies used in their programming and administration. Responses are intended for the exclusive use of the agency, and are treated in a confidential manner, but can easily be compiled and shared at a Network level. AlphaPlus continues to work with the Regional Networks and the Advisory Group to create individualized implementation and data collection plans.

E-channel

AlphaPlus' services were reorganized to strengthen its role as the key LBS support agency in the area of instructional technology and technology education. As a participant at the MTCU E-channel Roundtable meetings, AlphaPlus brought forward materials and resources that support effective distance learning and that can be effectively integrated into face-to-face delivery services.

Moodle Hosting

AlphaPlus now hosts Moodle sites for five literacy agencies: Community Literacy Ontario (CLO) and Laubach Literacy Ontario plus three that are new this year: Prince Edward Learning Centre, Literacy Link South Central and the Labour Education Centre. This year AlphaPlus staff provided CLO with a Moodle-activity-scan assessment in advance of their May 2009 Performance Management Training course in Moodle, now a stand-alone course accessible at <http://clo.alphaplus.ca>.

In addition, AlphaPlus Centre hosts a Moodle site for Canadian National Institute For The Blind (CNIB), Deaf/blind LBS programs. Currently, four CNIB literacy staff are AlphaPlus Moodle training graduates. Two CNIB Moodle courses were offered to students on-site in early April 2010.0.

Training

Moodle Training

This past year, AlphaPlus accepted 80 seat requests for our 8-week online **Introduction to Moodle training**. Fifty-four adult educators achieved a training completion certificate raising our number of trained graduates to 145. Offered in English, this training included educators from Anglo, Native, Deaf and Deaf/blind programs.

Our **Build and Deliver a Short Moodle Course training** project filled the initial 15 training seats within two days of opening. We accommodated a growing waiting list by adding 10 additional seats. This ten-week training, developed by AlphaPlus Centre, includes a three-week period during which 15 Moodle courses are delivered to students. Delivered in English using Moodle and Centra, 3 educators from Native and 3 educators from Deaf and Deaf/blind programs participated. An external evaluator completed a report on this first effort.

2009-2010 Highlights

AlphaPlus presented two online sessions at the April 3-4, 2009 **Canadian Moodle Moot**, in one session participating on a panel showcasing Ontario best practices with the York Region District School Board, Seneca College, and York University. We presented, from the not-for-profit sector perspective, how adult literacy students have used Moodle tools to build community and how AlphaPlus has built Moodle Introductory training to meet the needs of busy adult educators in Ontario.

As a continuation of a successful fee-for-service agreement with the Centre for Literacy and the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) in 2008/09, this year AlphaPlus delivered our second five-week blended training event. Thirty EMSB instructors in Montreal were trained on Web 2.0 resources and how to integrate them into their teaching best practices. A combination of face-to-face computer lab-based training with an online component delivered **using Moodle from our Opening Doors site** was used.

Tech Tuesdays

Started in September 2009, our informal monthly Tech Tuesday meetings allow Adult Basic Education (ABE) administrators, educators and supporters to network and learn about new and innovative web-based technology and tools. Using MeetUp.com, we announce new meetings online, allow people to RSVP, to provide feedback and post documents, links and files discussed during the sessions. More recently, our group has begun to meet at a computer lab kindly offered to us by Kelly Library. 57 members actively participate in the sessions. During our next fiscal year we plan to expand the range of discussed topics and offer some of the sessions online. Join our group at <http://www.meetup.com/TechTuesdays/>.

Web Savvy

AlphaPlus' Web Savvy project, designed to offer on-demand training in exploring, using and integrating new Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, social-bookmarking, and other tools into literacy practice, allowed us to better connect with the literacy field in Ontario. We have developed stronger relationships with many organizations and networks and are working on partnership opportunities.



Although we were funded to deliver six to eight workshops, due to their popularity, we have expanded the project and in total, between January and May, we have delivered the training to 12 organizations, and have added three organizations to a waiting list for future workshops.

Recently, we applied for more funding to expand the availability of the training sessions and introduce new topics recommended by the field. This year, we also hope to offer some of the training sessions online via webinars and recorded training sessions.

We are receiving inquiries from the field about this year's Web Savvy training opportunities and plan to respond to them soon.

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