



AlphaPlus
www.alphaplus.ca

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Mission, Vision & Values

Mission

AlphaPlus seeks to further adult literacy learning by helping educators and organizations to become digitally enabled. AlphaPlus is focused on using technology to further digital literacy at all levels.

Vision

We envision a Canada where all people have the literacy and digital skills to enable them to participate actively in the social, political, cultural, and economic life of our country.

Values

- Literacy is a life-enhancing set of skills, which enable people to fully participate in their communities and see life as full of possibility.
- Using digital technologies is an essential component of literacy. These technologies are critical to almost every activity in our economy and society.
- Adult learners should have fair and equitable access to basic education through a variety of options to meet their unique needs, culture, and circumstances.
- Learners, educators, and AlphaPlus work together in a constantly changing learning environment.
- AlphaPlus uses digital technology tools to model behaviour to the field and to enhance our own learning.

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 educators. Continuing in the tradition of Alpha Ontario, AlphaPlus’ mandate became to provide information, resources, and support services to adult literacy and

language training programs via educators working in Deaf, Native, Francophone, and Anglophone 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 on the demand for online learning and paved the way for our current Web-based, digital technology focus.

Our current mandate is to further adult literacy learning by helping educators and organizations to become digitally enabled.

A Message from the Chair - Judith Robinson



AlphaPlus continues to develop new and dynamic ways to serve the Canadian literacy community. Our strategic plan has introduced additional, relevant, practical, and innovative supports for adult educators to engage in digital learning and instructional delivery, and the teaching of digital literacy skills. Through the insightful leadership of our new Executive Director, Greg Gulas, and the highly committed AlphaPlus staff, our organization is providing materials and methodologies that help to realize the AlphaPlus vision. Sample Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) tasks, technology planning, Moodle instruction, research, Tech Tuesdays, E-bulletins, blogs, surveys, and a vital, informative website are just some of the ways AlphaPlus currently serves the literacy community.

We are strengthening our Board's understanding and connection to the work of literacy providers by requiring that Directors complete an orientation course of nine lessons in Moodle. In addition, we have reached out to recruit members who can effectively represent the work of the different sectors in Ontario, and have brought in two new Directors with specific expertise and experience to support the work of AlphaPlus.

This is an exciting time for AlphaPlus, and we look forward to another busy and productive year working with and for providers of Adult Basic Education.

A Message from the Executive Director – Greg Gulas



Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) organizations spent much of 2012 figuring out how to implement the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) and AlphaPlus was there to help. Using Digital Technology is one of the six core competencies in the OALCF, and AlphaPlus developed and published a series of sample tasks and activities around this competency, in both English and French. Tasks can be used as is, or can be customized to the specific needs of a class or learner. AlphaPlus also collaborated with QUILL Learning Network to create an online portal of sample tasks and activities that allows practitioners to add their own. These activities ensure that all LBS educators have access to valuable resources to help them integrate OALCF competencies into their instruction.

AlphaPlus published several research reports on how technology is being used in LBS instruction. This research helped to highlight best practices and share insights by interviewing instructors and students. AlphaPlus staff also spent time observing instruction in four different programs and how they used technology. Varying degrees of integration were observed but two conclusions were quite clear. First, that each program used the technology in specific ways to meet the needs of their learners, suggesting there is no standard solution for implementation. Second, that effective use of technology in instruction requires planning not just in the classroom, but at an agency wide level. As a result, AlphaPlus is currently engaged in creating planning tools, as well as developing an IT coaching service, to help each agency find the solutions that will work best for their needs.

AlphaPlus continues to help educators stay informed on the latest and best uses of technology for LBS instruction. Through our website, publications and professional development tools, we maintain a dialogue with the field, gathering best practices and making this information available to other programs. Although technology is changing constantly, AlphaPlus will be there to help LBS programs make the best use of IT to ensure their students are not just literate, but digitally literate.

Resources

AlphaPlus News – electronic newsletter

Our monthly AlphaPlus News continues to be well received in the field. It delivers information and updates on our latest initiatives, tools and resources to more than 2,000 subscribers. Links to our latest news, webinar announcements and recordings, and upcoming events are also included. If you don't have time to visit our website on an ongoing basis, consider subscribing to our newsletter (<http://alphaplus.ca/en/news/subscribe.html>) and have the updates delivered directly to your Inbox.

Our archived newsletters are also available online (<http://alphaplus.ca/component/acymailing/archive/listid-1-mailinglist.html>).

Website and social networking channels

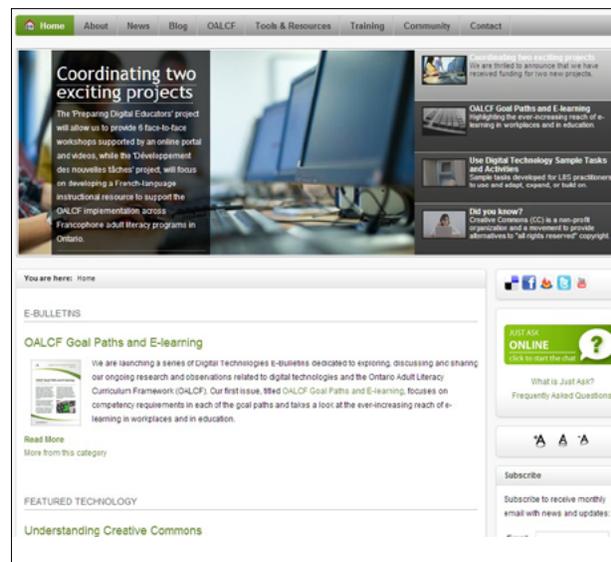
The AlphaPlus website (<http://alphaplus.ca>) is designed to be our hub of information and resources related to technology and the literacy field. Updated on an ongoing basis, it allows us to share news, updates, reports, podcasts, webinars and more – all accessible to our site visitors in one convenient location.

This year, we set up a new Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) menu in which we highlighted links and resources we thought would be valuable to the literacy field.

In our monthly FEATURED TECHNOLOGY section (<http://alphaplus.ca/en/featured-technology.html>) we featured topics including Apps and iPads, YouTube, Google Calendar, Pocket, Dropbox and Voki. On the French website, we featured Pinterest, Google forms and much more.

We also actively posted and connected with our followers through social media channels such as Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/alphapluscentre>) and Twitter (@alphapluscentre) and connected with visitors through comments on the website, Just Ask chat and email.

Overall this past year, we had 25,293 visits to our English website and 2,770 visits to our French website (<http://fr.alphaplus.ca>).



Feedback from site visitors:

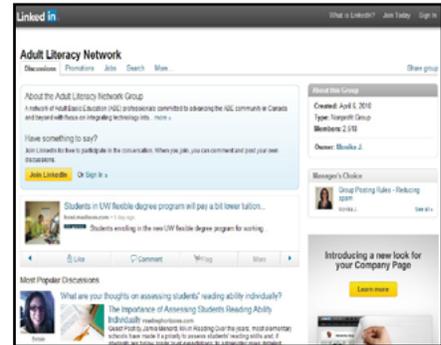
I really appreciate the supports and services that AlphaPlus provides our program. You provide us with access and knowledge to essential technology issues that impact positively on our organization. This support allows small organizations to be competitive, effective and up-to-date. Without your support many of these areas would be overlooked and missed. Thank you!

2012-2013 Highlights

Adult Literacy Network group on LinkedIn

To better connect with members of the literacy community, we set up an *Adult Literacy Network* group on LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Adult-Literacy-Network-2930825/about>).

The group brings together literacy supporters from various organizations and businesses and from other provinces and countries. Although the majority of our current 2,452 membership base is from North America, we have members from Ireland, the United States, New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, Liberia, Greece, Namibia, the United Kingdom, Pakistan, Ireland, France, India and Switzerland.



Blog

We had over 4,230 blog views this year (<http://alphaplus.ca/en/alphaplus-blog.html>). We are happy that the blog continues to be an important source of information for adult literacy, technology and recent research findings in the literacy field and beyond.

Podcasts

In this year's series of Tech Podcasts (<http://www.alphaplus.ca/en/web-tools/tech-podcasts-group1/tech-podcasts.html>):

- Suzanne Smythe, lecturer in literacy and Adult Education at the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University, speaks about her report, *Incorporating Digital Technologies in Adult Basic Education: Concepts, Practices and Recommendations*, which explores how digital technology is changing what it means to be literate in today's world.
- Leah Morris, Executive Director of the Adult Basic Education Association in Hamilton and Sara Gill, Assistant Executive Director of Adult Basic Education Association in Hamilton, discuss the *Clear Writing* online course available through Learning Networks of Ontario.

To listen to our podcasts on iTunes or on your mobile device, visit <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/podcast/alphaplus-tech-podcasts/id554306102>.

AlphaPlus Web Index

We continued adding new resources to our Web Index this year, focusing mostly on learning management systems, technology planning, instructor training and learning resources.

The English version of the Web Index can be accessed through the social bookmarking tool Delicious (<http://www.delicious.com/alphapluswebindex>). The French version of the Index has been moved to a different social bookmarking tool, called Diigo, which allowed us to create a group for sharing information in French (<https://www.diigo.com/profile/alphaplus>).

2012-2013 Highlights

Information Sessions

This year's session topics included:

- A presentation at *Gateway to Learning* (Literacy and Basic Skills) at the Thames Valley District School Board's PD day
- A presentation about AlphaPlus' services at Project READ's AGM
- A presentation about the *Gukkandas* (I will learn) project at the CNIE Conference and the Technology Literacy Conference
- A presentation about AlphaPlus at Laubach Literacy Ontario's Nominations Committee Meeting
- Delivery of an Instructor PD Session on Technology and Numeracy at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB)
- A presentation on the *Task-Based for LBS* portal and networked with participants at the Literacy Networks of Ontario meeting
- Delivery of the *Using Social Media to Connect* webinar for Northern Networks
- Delivery of *Is there and App for that? – iPads in the literacy classroom* workshop at the Laubach Literacy Ontario conference
- Delivery of *Tutor Skills Development Night* workshop at St. Christopher House



In addition, AlphaPlus staff participated in:

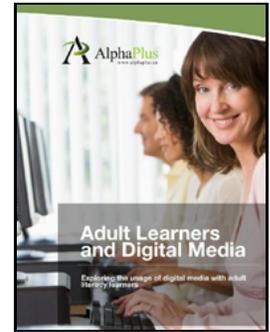
- the Community Literacy of Ontario's AGM and PD day
- Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy's (MTML) AGM
- MTML's Speaker Series on Literacy and Technology
- Literacy Link Eastern Ontario sponsored Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Network Meeting
- the Symposium ontarien de l'éducation et de la formation des adultes francophones
- the Literacy and Basic Skills Performance Management System (LBS PMS) Training - Central Region
- Northern Literacy Network's Employment Ontario Regional Meeting hosted by Cindi Davidson at Northern District Library
- MTML's *Pathways* project meeting
- Labour Education Centre's 25th Anniversary celebrations
- EduConnect's panel discussion on Education and Technology
- the Round Table on Technology Mini-Summit: *Is there and App for that? Exemplary Practices for Engaging Students* at Humber College

Research

Research Reports

Since 2010, six research projects were funded to support research and promote best practices in Adult Basic Education (ABE). This year, the final two reports were published:

- an English report titled, *Adult Learners and Digital Media* (<http://www.alphaplus.ca/en/web-tools/online-publications-a-reportsgroup1/adult-learners-and-digital-media-2012.html>)
- and a French report titled, *Dans les rouages de Nom@d - Retour réflexif/Lessons Learned During Literacy Practitioner Training in French Using Moodle* (<http://fr.alphaplus.ca/outils-et-ressources/publications-et-rapports/apprendre-en-ligne-sur-moodle-retour-reflexif.html>).



Issues addressed in the reports include digital technology practices relevant to community-based adult literacy settings, attitudes and experiences of “digital immigrants” and the pedagogical and technological value of Moodle in a Francophone context.

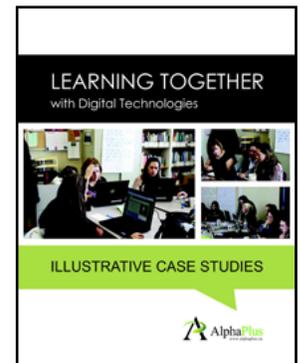
From the Field

Learning Together with Digital Technologies

This year, we produced a report on a short-term project conducted in partnership with four self-selected, community-based, adult literacy agencies in the Greater Toronto Area (<http://alphaplus.ca/en/web-tools/online-publications-a-reportsgroup1/learning-together-with-technologies-2012.html>).

Although over the years we have worked closely with many adult literacy programs across the province, we wanted to look more closely at the realities of using digital technologies for adult literacy teaching and learning. Specifically, we wanted to see how a program uses, works with and integrates digital technology in adult literacy programming and learn about the opportunities and challenges that programs face so that we are better informed and can more closely align our services and supports to the needs of adult literacy programs.

Further, we wanted to take a preliminary look at the use of digital technologies and e-learning in adult literacy programs in relation to the Use Digital Technology competency of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF).



Support

Moodle Course Hosting

This year, AlphaPlus hosted courses on our Virtual Classroom for Adult Educators site (<http://educators.alphaplus.ca>) for a number of organizations.

- The Adult Basic Education Association and Learning Networks Ontario delivered their *Clear Writing* course to educators from within the Literacy and Basic Skills field and at year-end, opened the course to the world. AlphaPlus helped promote this course by developing a podcast, through social media and our blog.
- The Canadian Deafblind Association Ontario Chapter developed and piloted a series of Moodle courses for educators in advance of launching their own Moodle site for distance training delivery.
- The Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network (SMLN) developed the *SMLN Orientation* Moodle course for Program Managers.

2012-2013 Highlights

Moodle Site Hosting

AlphaPlus-hosted Moodle sites active this year include the Toronto District School Board Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) site where a First Aid course was added (<http://tdsblbs.alphaplus.ca>), the Laubach Literacy Ontario Training Post site where Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework courses were added (<http://laubach.alphaplus.ca>) and the George Brown College site where an Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) Biology class is active (<http://gbcupgrading.alphaplus.ca>).

To make things a bit easier, we also moved the content of our Virtual Classrooms for Deafblind Learners site into the Deaf Moodle site (<http://deaf.alphaplus.ca/moodle1/>).

Technology Planning Roadmap

The Technology Planning Roadmap (<http://www.alphaplus.ca/en/web-tools/online-tools/technology-planning-roadmap.html>) is a set of packages designed to help adult literacy organizations make the best use of the technology they already have and to plan for their future needs.

The set of packages are based on our developing understanding of the important role planning plays in the successful integration of digital technologies in teaching and learning. This understanding is based on extensive literature reviews focused on the use and integration of technology in the education and non profit sectors as well as our work in and with the adult literacy field in Ontario.



Training

Webinars

We offered 28 webinars this year (<http://www.alphaplus.ca/en/training/webinarsgroup1/webinars-schedule.html>) under the following categories.

Moodle Mondays Webinar Series

We offered seven monthly webinars to support Moodle graduates on their continued Moodle path and to meet the expressed needs of *Introduction to Moodle* graduates. Webinars were supported by resources, quizzes and practice tasks located in our *Refresh Your Moodle Skills* course. Twenty-eight educators registered for the series with twenty-one unique trainees active in all or select parts of this training opportunity. Many indicated plans to self-manage further learning by using the *Refresh Your Moodle Skills* course. Participants also indicated that the recorded webinars gave them the flexibility to continue with their learning without the requirement to participate in live webinars.

Tech Tuesdays

It's hard to believe that we have been organizing Tech Tuesdays training sessions for over three years now. This year, in order to deliver the typical ten sessions and reach a greater audience, we developed monthly webinars. On the third Tuesday of each month, we held live sessions with participants from Ontario and beyond to explore and discuss technology and tools they could use in the classroom such as wikis, blogs, Google Apps, YouTube, Delicious bookmarking sites and interactive whiteboards.

Digital Competency Wednesdays

To help organizations integrate technology into program design and delivery and to support practitioners and volunteers develop skills needed to successfully use digital technologies in their practice, we organized a series of eight webinars called *Digital Competency Wednesdays*.

Delivered by AlphaPlus staff, the series allowed us to take a closer look at learning management systems, share ready-to-use Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) resources for instructors, discuss e-learning and goal paths, explore what it takes to be a digitally-enabled teacher and more.

2012-2013 Highlights

Moodle

Introduction to Moodle Training

This year, AlphaPlus offered eight-week *Introduction to Moodle* Spring and Fall training courses in English (<http://training.alphaplus.ca/moodle/>). Forty-three educators registered and twenty-four completed the full training. The training satisfaction rate was 95%. Evaluation data indicates that a fully distant flexible training model works for Ontario educators, supportive practical training is appreciated and active weekly engagement by the trainer is seen as an element of retention. Trainees highly value the peer interaction built into the learning process.

Graduates express confidence in their new Moodle skills and are ready to continue learning to Moodle with ongoing support.



Introduction to Moodle Training in French

In February, AlphaPlus offered one four-week *Formation sur Moodle* training course in French (<http://formation.alphaplus.ca/moodle/>). The objective of this training was to familiarize participants with Moodle course navigation and support each in creating two Moodle learning activities. Fifteen educators registered and eight completed the training. End of training feedback indicated a 100% training satisfaction rate and 60% of the course graduates plan to use Moodle in their work going forward.



Model Courses

Try an Online Course – Healthy Teeth

Based on research into the typical onboarding courses employers offer new employees, AlphaPlus developed a sample Moodle course for educators to offer to their Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) students as part of workforce/workplace preparation training. *Try an Online Course – Healthy Teeth* aims to present the rigour, learning and assessment activities typical in onboarding while focused on a topic that supports the development of soft skills needed to succeed in workplace and social environments. This course is available on the Virtual Classroom for Adult Learners site (<http://learners.alphaplus.ca/moodle1/>).

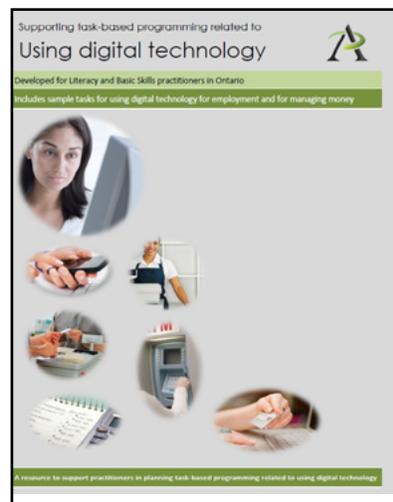
Board Orientation

This year, we developed a nine-week AlphaPlus Board Orientation course available through Moodle. The course provides AlphaPlus' board members with an overview of the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) field in Ontario and the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework.

Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) Evaluation Project / Framework for Ongoing Evidence-based Review of the OALCF

In cooperation with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), thirteen Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) service providers, as well as four regional literacy networks and seven literacy support organizations, AlphaPlus developed a framework for the ongoing evidence-based review of the core components of the OALCF. The document describes a proposed evidence-based review process including guiding principles and a cyclical three-year plan for evidence-based decision-making about the core components of the OALCF; recommended outcome measures to determine the use and effectiveness of the core components of the OALCF; potential sources of information and data collection methods; and mechanisms for communicating with and engaging stakeholders in each stage of the review process.

The framework is intended to be a living document that evolves in response to changes in information needs, changes in the OALCF core components and changes in the broader Ministry and programming context.



Instructional Resources - Use Digital Technology Sample Tasks and Activities

We developed a two-part package featuring instructional resources in support of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework's (OALCF) Use Digital Technology competency called *Use Digital Technology Sample Tasks and Activities* (<http://www.alphaplus.ca/en/oalcf/use-digital-technology-instructional-resources.html>). The tasks are intended to support using digital technology in Literacy and Basic Skills and are made to be adapted and expanded upon. They also offer varied approaches to designing learning materials in relation to the Use Digital Technology competency (D) in the OALCF. The same package was also offered in French: *Ressources d'apprentissage en ligne – Tâches jalons pour Utiliser la technologie numérique* (<http://fr.alphaplus.ca/clao/exemples-de-taches.html>).

Task-Based Activities for LBS

This year, we collaborated with QUILL Learning Network and other organizations and individuals to develop the *Task-Based Activities for LBS* portal (<http://taskbasedactivitiesforlbs.ca/>).

Created for Literacy and Basic Skills' (LBS) practitioners in Ontario, the portal is a collection of activities aligned with the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework and organized by stream, goal path and level.

This fully searchable database, available in English and French, and designed for the Anglophone, Deaf, Native and Francophone streams, provides task-based activities (submitted by the literacy field and available in Microsoft Word and PDF) to help educators support their students in achieving their goals.



AlphaPlus worked closely with QUILL Learning Network to offer web-based content management system expertise, while programmer and developer, Chris Caple, helped us build the website.

2012-2013 Projects

L'art d'apprendre en ligne

L'art d'apprendre en ligne is a course for Francophone adult learners designed to explore the digital skills typically required in online learning. The course can be used with the support of an instructor in a blended learning environment. It is available on the *Classe virtuelle pour les formateurs et formatrices en litt ratie des adultes* site, the AlphaPlus Moodle site for Francophone literacy instructors (<http://educateurs.alphaplus.ca/moodle1/>).

Bo te   outils pour partager des ressources en ligne (Toolbox to share resources online)

AlphaPlus developed a Toolbox designed to help Francophone adult literacy practitioners search for, evaluate, organize and share online learning resources. As part of the Toolbox, a social bookmarking tool was used to create a network to facilitate the exchange of information about online learning resources. The aim of the Toolbox was to offer a starting point for literacy practitioners to assess and share information about online resources in the new context of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework.

The Toolbox offers an evaluation tool for online resources, tips on using a search engine, a list of catalogues and directories specific to adult literacy, an example of a learning activity, an introduction to social bookmarking and a step by step video on how to join the network.

The Toolbox was developed using LiveBinders, a web service in which online binders can be created and shared (<http://www.livebinders.com/play/present?id=510906>).

What to Expect in 2013-14

Technology (IT) Planning

In building upon our work surrounding the Technology Planning Roadmap (<http://www.alphaplus.ca/en/web-tools/online-tools/technology-planning-roadmap.html>), we are developing a suite of IT Planning Services designed for Anglophone, Aboriginal, Deaf and Francophone Literacy and Basic Skills and Employment Ontario agencies. The IT planning tools will be developed to help manage agencies' key success factors, including:

- IT instructional implementation and training supported by creative, consistent and visionary leadership
- solid technology strategies and enabling infrastructures
- strong human resources and technical capabilities
- technology skill as a foundation skill and
- strategies that bridge cultural contexts (Anglophone, Deaf, Aboriginal, and Francophone) with training.

Our goals in developing this service are to help agencies develop tools to create IT plans that support technology for administration, for teaching and learning and for effective program risk and infrastructure management.

What to Expect in 2013-14

Nouvelles ressources d'apprentissage en ligne – Tâches jalons pour Utiliser la technologie numérique (New French Instructional Resources - Use Digital Technology Sample Tasks)

AlphaPlus will develop a French-language instructional resource supporting the implementation of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum (OALCF) and adapt these to the needs of Francophone adult literacy programs in Ontario.

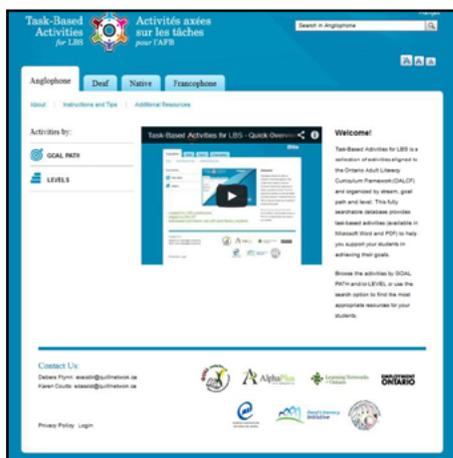
This resource will contain sample tasks for the OALCF's Use Digital Technology competency and will follow a similar conceptual approach to the Anglophone resource, *Supporting task-based programming related to Using digital technology*, published by AlphaPlus last year.

Preparing Digital Educators

This project will allow us to provide six face-to-face professional training workshops supported by an online portal and five online videos designed to help educators and Employment Ontario service delivery agencies incorporate digital technology skills and tasks in the classroom.

The training, developed with assistance and support from an Advisory Committee comprised of four literacy networks: Literacy Link South Central, Literacy Northwest, Literacy Ontario Central South and Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy, will focus on inspiring and supporting participants who are not comfortable with technology, or haven't used technology in the classroom. Special emphasis will be placed on tools and resources that educators can use to help students develop material for the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum's Use Digital Technology competency.

Task-Based Activities for Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) portal support



This year we will continue supporting QUILL Learning Network in building the *Task-Based Activities for LBS* portal (<http://taskbasedactivitiesforlbs.ca/>).

We will work with QUILL and Project READ on creating webinars to walk practitioners through the steps involved in re-casting activities into Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework vernacular. These webinars will be primarily delivered to the Anglophone stream, but QUILL will be partnering with the French, Native, and Deaf streams to make them available to all practitioners in the province.

This project will not only teach practitioners how to create new activities, but the documents they work on during the webinar will become available on the portal

as well. This will add over 100 documents to the resources available online.

Board Members



Judith Robinson , Board Chair
Pedagogical consultant, publishing



David Clark, Board Vice Chair
Program Lead, Organizational Development, Toronto Hydro



Michael Budd
Professional Learning Facilitator



Joshua Vella
Account Manager, Netapp



John Campbell
Owner/Manager, Cannero Corporation



Elizabeth Williams
Director of Marketing and Communications, ADP Canada



Brian D. Nicholson
Program Officer, Community Programs, Toronto District School Board



Lina Kim
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Coordinator/Science Professor, Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning



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