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"...the literacy resource for school board personnel and adult education teachers"

The Adult Learners' Week Issue!

Adult Learners' Week (in Québec: *Semaine québécoise des adultes en formation*) takes place from **March 28 to April 3**. According to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, Adult Learners' Week **celebrates adult learners across the country and the joy of learning throughout life** (*).

In Quebec (**), the objective of this special week is to promote the possibilities of lifelong learning in adults' personal, social and professional lives. Activities across Québec focus on:

- * *Adults' learning experiences*
- * *Adults' opinions regarding learning opportunities*
- * *The diverse locations where learning can take place*
- * *The various organisations and individuals who are making a difference in the field of adult education in Quebec*
- * *The benefits of lifelong learning*

Going back to school, or upgrading your skills can be a challenge for any adult. Work and family responsibilities—not to mention the added financial burden—can make learning a challenge! For adults with low literacy skills, long waiting lists, content that is not suited to their specific needs and inconvenient location or timing of courses can make learning seem an insurmountable task. **The Quebec Literacy Working Group can help!** Our new **QLWG Skills for Life Series** can be used in the classroom or in a distance education setting. We are even creating e-learning units for adults who prefer to learn on-line! Read on, and **happy Adult Learners' Week to all of you!**

Sources: (*) <http://www.unesco.ca/en/activity/education/AdultLearners.aspx>
 (**) <http://www.semaine.icea.qc.ca/fr/semaine>



It's a fact

"Education is a fundamental right as enshrined in article 26 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Every person, regardless of race, gender, ethnic or social origin, age or ability, has the right to access of education."

Source: Canadian Commission for UNESCO

<http://www.unesco.ca/en/activity/education/AdultLearners.aspx>

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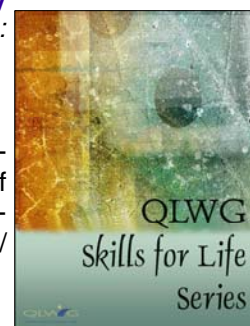
QLWG's Working for You:

The QLWG Skills for Life Series

Over the past few months, the members of QLWG have been busy getting our QLWG Skills for Life Series ready to publish. Comprised of 30 units ranging from *Employment Skills*, to *Living Green* to *Managing my Money*, we are proud to announce that we now have our copyright and our ISBN number: our program is **ready to go to print, and will soon be available on-line!** (see page 3: *QLWG has a new Web Site*).

We gave our first training sessions on the QLWG Skills for Life Series at the fall QPAT (Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers) conference and at the March 21 First Annual Conference of the Quebec Association For Adult Learning (QAAL). In the coming weeks, we will also be giving a session at the April 6 MELS/PROCEDE Conference at the Pearson Adult Centre in Lasalle.

(continued on page 2)



PLAIN LANGUAGE IS KEY

Are the flyers and promotional materials in your adult education centre easy for all adults to read?

People must be able to use written information to participate fully in society.

Documents that are poorly designed or that use complex, wordy and technical terms are too difficult for many adults to read.

Even people with good literacy skills skip information and sometimes don't understand what's written.

Some people feel that plain language talks down to people. On the contrary! Plain language includes and respects people.

When people understand what they read, they ask fewer questions, complain less, and make fewer mistakes. Their health and safety are not at risk.

A good example: Canada Pension forms used to be written for level 5 (see page 4). When they re-did the literature at a level 2-3, an additional 750,000 Canadians applied!

Want to know more about plain language?

Visit this site:

<http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/plainlang.htm>
(source for this article)



QLWG's Working for You ...continued

The QLWG Skills for Life Series is Going Virtual! (Continued from page 1)

While we originally created our units to be used in a traditional distance education context, we became aware of a bonus that we had not foreseen: literacy teachers in our adult education centres were *thrilled* with the materials, and immediately saw uses for them not *just* for distance education, but in their regular literacy classrooms as well. **This year, the Quebec Literacy Working Group is in the process of creating yet another choice for our learners and our teachers: having our QLWG Skills for Life Units converted to an e-learning format.**

Our distance education expert at the QLWG table, Ilze Epnors (ETSB) has pointed out that *some students learn best with an e-learning format while others learn best with a more traditional paper-based approach*. With both formats available, adults would have the choice, depending on their needs and on their learning styles. In addition, some adult learners in Quebec do not have easy access to the volunteer tutors that are such an important part of our paper-based model: an e-learning model would be more visual and more interactive, giving adults who do not have regular access to an actual *person*, a leg-up in terms of the help they are getting. Finally, some adults in our more remote boards do not have access to high-speed Internet, so the paper-based model (with individual support built in, in their communities) would be the ideal format for *them*.



Want more information? Visit your local QLWG representative at <http://www.nald.ca/qlwg/>

Adult Learners' Week: What's Happening in Your Area?

- * The **Littoral School Board** and **Chevery Community Learning Centre** are offering an on-line training session for adults on the Lower North Shore entitled '*Literacy and Learning*' to raise awareness of the literacy skills needed to function in today's society
- * The Adult Education and Vocational Services department of the **English Montreal School Board** has organized a presentation to adult students featuring Mr. Jacques Demers, RDS sports announcer and former coach of the *Montreal Canadiens* hockey team.
- * The **Eastern Shores School Board** is hosting a luncheon open to the general public "Success in Lifelong Learning". They have invited past graduates from their vocational and academic programs to speak about their experiences (either work or further education) since they have left ESSB.
- * **Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Vimont Center** in Laval will be celebrating Adult Learner's Week with an open house and a week full of exciting activities, workshops, presentations, speakers, book/movie reviews, and learners' awards.
- * Students at the **ACCESS Center of the Riverside School Board** will be gathering on March 31st in the cafeteria to celebrate Adult Learners' Week. Students from the art classes will display the posters they prepared on the theme of adult lifelong learning. Students learning English will be singing a song learned in class while students in the FP will talk on the subject matter they are studying. Muffins and coffee will be provided to all as refreshments
- * **Lester B. Pearson School Board**, in collaboration with ICÉA, QAAL and CRÉ de Montréal is holding an official launch of the event with guest of honour Anwar Stewart of the *Montreal Alouettes*: learners will give testimonials and will be awarded certificates by LBPSB, QAAL and Literacy Unlimited. **Eastern Townships School Board** Distance Education students will also be honoured at this event.

SEMAINE QUÉBÉCOISE
DES ADULTES EN
FORMATION

QLWG Has a New Web Site!

Thanks to the generosity of the **National Adult Literacy Database (NALD)**, QLWG has a new Web site!



Check us out at: <http://www.nald.ca/qlwg/>

QLWG Partner Boards

Central Québec School Board
 Eastern Shores School Board
 Eastern Townships School Board
 English Montreal School Board
 Kativik School Board
 Littoral School Board
 Lester B. Pearson School Board
 New Frontiers School Board
 Riverside School Board
 Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board
 Western Quebec School Board

Adult Literacy: Why is Funding Always Such an Issue?

For literacy organisations across Canada, funding is an ongoing challenge. Three years ago, the federal government announced that it would no longer be funding adult literacy initiatives across Canada. While they temporarily brought back funding for many organisations in 2008-2009 following an outcry from literacy organisations across the country, many other groups—unable to stay afloat during the long wait for funding—closed their doors.

In Quebec, many groups have relied on a special federal-provincial grant that has been renewed yearly (IFPCA). QLWG is one of those groups. An ongoing challenge is that we cannot obtain *core* funding; only *project* funding. While projects may be developed progressively over a few years, they cannot be carried out indefinitely—and they must have a clear beginning and end. Projects may indeed be easier for the government to monitor than core funding grants, but they lack the vision, continuity and stability that literacy providers require to offer stable, quality programs and services to our adult learners. Adults with low literacy skills are notoriously hard to reach and they lack the stability in their own lives to attend regular literacy programs on a regular basis.

While the federal *Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES)* is currently offering funding to literacy organisations in the rest of Canada (according to stringent project guidelines aimed largely at employment skills), funding for Quebec in 2009-2010 is once more in limbo. Quebec organisations who have traditionally received more than 50% of their funding through IFPCA grants require a waiver from our provincial government in order to apply directly for federal funding. Unfortunately, the provincial government, currently in negotiations to repatriate the federal-provincial monies *back* to Quebec, will not sign the waiver.

As QLWG is currently only half-way through developing a major e-learning project (see page 2), we are anxious to see the negotiations between our federal and provincial education Ministers come to a successful close. In the meantime, like all the other literacy organisations across Quebec, we wait...



QLWG FUNDING ONCE MORE IN JEOPARDY....

Training for Teachers QLWG Skills for Life Series

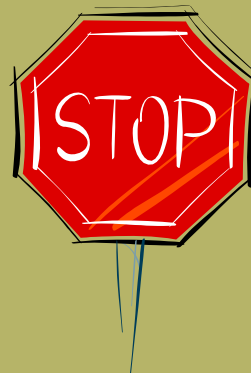
Teachers!!! Who is Victoria Wolfe? What is a 'Word Stop'?

Come to the **April 6 MELS/PROCEDE Conference** (Pearson Adult Education Centre) and find out!

The Quebec Literacy Working Group will be offering workshops to teachers on the *QLWG Skills for Life Series*.

Come to get your first glimpse of the finished product! We will be presenting the 30 units for adult learners as well as the Tutor Support manual that accompanies each unit.

We will be highlighting the many interesting features of the *QLWG Skills for Life Series*.



One in Five Adult Quebecers Cannot Read this Headline

The 2003 *Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALL) Survey* identifies 5 levels of prose literacy:

- **Level 1:** adults have few decoding skills
- **Level 2:** adults' skills are limited to simple printed material
- **Level 3:** adults are average readers
- **Levels 4 and 5:** adults have strong literacy skills

1 in 5 Quebecers have difficulty reading and have few basic skills or strategies for decoding and working with a text (**level 1**)

49% of Quebecers aged 16-65 do not have the "desired" level of competency to function easily in today's society (**levels 1 and 2**)

Adult Quebecers at levels 1, 2 and even 3 could have significant difficulties with much of the written information and many of the new technologies that they encounter at work and in everyday situations. The number of adults attending literacy classes in Quebec is far smaller than the number of adults who actually need these services.

It takes a lot of courage for an adult to come forward — your encouragement could make a world of difference!



Often people with low literacy skills do not want anyone to know that they have a problem and have become very good at covering up and disguising their difficulty. They think that their situation is unique and they may hesitate to come forward because of past failures in the school system.

ESL or Literacy?

We recognise that not all literacy learners are necessarily English mother tongue learners. *Many second-language learners have struggled to learn to read and write in their own language for a variety of reasons.* However, an adult who has learned to read and write; who may even hold a university degree in his/her mother tongue — cannot be qualified as a 'literacy' learner. True literacy learners often feel out of place in a classroom with adults who have already 'learned how to learn' and end up dropping out. ESL learners can feel frustrated with the slower pace of the adult literacy learners in the classroom. **See your local QLWG rep for more information!**

LITERACY RECOGNITION AWARDS

The Quebec Literacy Working Group, Literacy Volunteers of Quebec, The Centre for Literacy and the Quebec Association for Adult Learning will be launching the annual **Literacy Recognition Awards** during Adult Learners' Week. This award recognizes the courage of adults who know it's never too late to learn to read and write or to improve their reading and writing. It also recognizes teachers and tutors who work with adult literacy students — often outside the mainstream in unexpected places. **SEE YOUR LOCAL QLWG REP FOR DETAILS!!**

Four awards of \$125 each

Two awards in the community sector:

- One for a tutor
- One for a learner

Two awards in the school board sector:

- One for a teacher
- One for a learner

Note: this is a literacy — and not an ESL — award



"Once you learn to read, you will forever be free."

Frederick Douglass



"...the literacy resource for School Board Personnel"