



Literacy not only connects us to new worlds — whether fictional or non-fiction — but to knowledge and empowerment.

This special section celebrates the importance of literacy in all forms and the power of words to bring us together.

International Literacy Day 2021

Credit: Mark Burnham Photography

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EDUCATION

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Helping Francophone adult learners soar to new heights

Literacy and essential skills program a stepping-stone to success

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If you're a Toronto-area Francophone who didn't finish high school, or if you earned your diploma but don't have the essential skills or grades needed to get into the workforce, college, a skilled trade apprenticeship or university, Alpha-Toronto wants you to knock on its door.

For more than 30 years, it has been delivering Employment Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program to Francophone adults, helping them develop and apply the workplace-related essential skills – including communication, numeracy, interpersonal and digital skills – needed to land a job or to serve as a stepping-stone to college or university.

"My staff and I have been at this for a very long time. We're very proud of our clients and we've very proud of what we've done," says Alpha-Toronto executive director Renaud Saint-Cyr. Many learners are refugees or newcomers to Canada. Some are receiving social assistance; others are earning minimum wage.

"It's kind of a mission to do work like this. Many of our clients have been on social assistance and are desperately trying to climb out of

it. Their motivation is very high, and we're committed to helping them," he says. There's no judgement: each learner has their own story and follows their own path-way to education. The criteria? You must live in the Toronto area, be 19 or over and French must be your official language of communication.

Here's what learners can expect:

1. Orientation. "We explain who we are and learn a bit about the client, including their history, whether they've completed high school and a general understanding of their needs. What are their employment goals?" Saint-Cyr explains. "What do they want to do in life?"

Saint-Cyr says if a client is interested in something Alpha-Toronto can't offer, and it's offered elsewhere in the city, they will refer them. Many people are referred to Alpha-Toronto through social services or health agencies, but you can also contact the agency yourself.

2. Literacy and essential skills assessment. Potential learners complete an assessment that will be used to develop a learning plan and determine how long it would take a learner to complete its program and move on to the



Alpha-Toronto delivers Employment Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program to Francophone adults. GETTY IMAGES

next step. Unsure if you or a client needs to complete the LBS program in order to prepare for that next step? An orientation and assessment can help you make that decision with confidence.

3. Learner plan development. The learner works with their trainer to create a personalized learning plan that outlines the various steps needed to achieve their goal. It describes one of the following 'goal paths':

- Employment. This path

prepares learners to earn a wage or salary and might include volunteering at a workplace or an internship. That sometimes leads to a job offer.

- Apprenticeship. This path prepares learners for on-the-job training for a skilled trade and could include specific vocational training.
- Secondary school credits. This path prepares learners to earn credits so they can earn a secondary school diploma.

- Post-secondary. This fast-track path prepares learners for formal education at a college or university for which high school completion or its equivalent is the normal entrance requirement.
- Independence. This path helps learners achieve literacy and basic skills so they can manage their basic needs, personal health, and personal issues and relationships, and also participate in the community.

4. Tailor-made training. For most Alpha-Toronto's clients, the LBS program is a stepping-stone to the Academic Career Entrance (ACE) program that's offered at Collège Boréal in Toronto and prepares learners to make a quick transition to college and/or university or employment.

"We work in partnership. Alpha-Toronto wouldn't thrive without ACE and ACE wouldn't thrive without Alpha-Toronto," Saint-Cyr says. "In a lot of places, the services we each provide are delivered independently in silos, so learners aren't able to reach the same heights. Working with other agencies and organizations is what makes Alpha-Toronto work so well."

5. Follow-up. Alpha-Toronto contacts learners at three, six and 12 months after they complete the LBS program. "If they wanted to go to post-secondary, we want to know if they were accepted and if they were, if they're still in post-secondary. If they got a job, what is that job and is it stable?" Saint-Cyr says. "Follow-up is important. We want to know that we've done our job."

To learn more, visit alpha-toronto.ca or call 416-542-1574.



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