

Practitioner Guide to Task-Based Programming

Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

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**EMPLOYMENT
ONTARIO**

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Before You Begin

The following four background papers available on the OALCF website provide an in-depth exploration of the key components that have shaped the development of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF):

1. *Curriculum Framework: Conceptual Foundation* (http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Curriculum_Framework_Conceptual_Foundations_March_2011.pdf), describing the development of the competency-based curriculum framework
2. *Foundations of Transition-Oriented Programming* (http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Foundations_of_Transition-Oriented_Programming_March_2011.pdf), describing learner transitions within the context of goal-directed and contextualized learning
3. *Foundations of Assessment* (http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Foundations_of_Assessment_March_2011.pdf), focusing on the importance of different assessment approaches
4. *Foundations of Learning Materials* (http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Foundations_of_Learning_Materials_March_2011.pdf), exploring context-rich program content

The OALCF has been developed to include all the features of competency-based programming, including

- competencies
- assessment
- learning materials
- learner transitions to employment, further education and training, or independence

These features are described in the papers above.

The Curriculum Framework is comprised of six competencies that organize learning content and describes proficiency using three levels of performance.

To get the most out of reading this guide, please read *Introducing the Curriculum Framework* (http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_introducing_the_CF_Mar_11.pdf) accessible from the “Understanding the Curriculum Framework” page on the OALCF website, and review the competencies.

Why Was the OALCF Developed?

The purpose of the new OALCF is to support service providers in developing programming that links literacy learning to a learner’s literacy use at home, in the workplace, in the community, and within other learning situations. The OALCF helps answer the learner’s question “*Why am I learning this?*”

The OALCF also supports literacy practitioners as they deliver programming to help learners develop and use the appropriate skills, knowledge, and behaviours to meet their interests and goals. It helps answer the practitioner’s question “*What do I need to teach?*”

Finally, the OALCF’s competency- and task-based approach to programming helps practitioners and learners make clear connections between literacy development and the real-life tasks that learners perform in work, learning, and community contexts—authentic tasks that reflect the learners’ needs, interests, and goals. By providing criteria and standards against which these tasks can be easily understood, the OALCF helps answer the external stakeholder’s question “*What does a person achieve in a literacy program?*”

Organizing a program around tasks

A program that is organized around tasks is important for learners, service providers, stakeholders, and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) for the following three reasons:

1. **A task can be understood in real-life terms.** Tasks related to a learner’s goal enable the learner to see the connection between the learning that occurs in the goal-directed LBS Program and the application of that learning in everyday activities.
2. **A task can be levelled.** You can analyze a task’s underlying complexity using the task and performance descriptors, indicators, and task examples in the Curriculum Framework. Analyzing both the qualities of the task itself and the observable characteristics of learner performance will help you determine the level of a task. The levelling of a task also provides a clear and easy way for learners and delivery agencies to talk about progress and achievement with other LBS providers and stakeholders.
3. **A task can be assessed.** The ability to level tasks brings greater consistency to assessment. Province-wide consistency in the assessment of learner progress is necessary for an accurate accounting of the overall success of the LBS Program, an important consideration for government and the public.

Why Does the OALCF Focus on Task-Based Programming?

The Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program is learner-centred, goal-directed, and transition-oriented. Its overarching purpose is for learners to develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviours they need to achieve their goals at home, at work, in educational settings, and in the community. The OALCF explicitly supports the achievement of these outcomes by focusing on how learners use what they have learned for specific purposes.

Through the LBS Program, learners can acquire the missing skills, knowledge, and behaviours necessary for moving on to other goals. However, a commitment to learning may be a challenge for many adults who have other responsibilities. Therefore, to inspire persistent participation, a literacy program must connect to something meaningful. A task-based approach related to learners’ goals provides the necessary motivation for learners to stay in the LBS Program long enough to succeed.

Rationale for a task-based approach to LBS programming

The following seven principles underlie the task-based approach of the OALCF:

1. **Task-based programming is an effective methodology to help learners use their literacy abilities.** Research confirms that knowledge is better retained when it is applied and integrated into daily practice.

It is not only the learning of skills and competencies in the classroom that is crucial to the success of literacy programs, but also their application in everyday private and occupational life ... the economic and social benefits of literacy do not spring from learning skills literacy but from using literacy skills. I would argue that virtually no-one has benefited from learning literacy skills; people only benefit from using their literacy skills to achieve some purpose.

Professor Alan Rogers, Director of Education for Development for DVV International, the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association¹

2. **Task-based programming is consistent with the principles of adult learning.** Because adults live in a task-driven world and are, either by choice or of necessity, practical “doers,” a task-based approach to learning has a particular appeal. Adults are more highly motivated by program content that is immediately relevant and applicable.
3. **A task-based approach builds on successful LBS practices.** Most LBS delivery agencies are already implementing various aspects of task-based programming. For example, many Learner Plans organize learning by tasks, and most programs use task-based demonstrations for initial, ongoing, and exit assessments.

Over the years, a wide range of task-based learning materials and resources have become available to programs through field research and development projects. To access the extensive number of high quality products developed in Ontario, please visit the website for the Ontario Literacy Coalition at <http://www.on.literacy.ca> or for La Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes at <http://www.coalition.ca>. You will find a complete list of all the LBS Support Organizations that have developed learner and practitioner resources.

4. **The OALCF supports the common assessment of learner progress.** The Curriculum Framework supports a consistent interpretation of learner progress through the levelling of tasks. In time, a set of standardized, goal-related tasks that indicate a learner’s progress towards goal completion (milestone tasks) will be used for program accountability. Using the kind of standardized criteria found in the Curriculum Framework to create and level tasks is the only way to ensure that a task-based approach is credible in educational, training, or employment settings.
5. **Task-based programming supports fair assessment practices.** By using a task-based approach in day-to-day programming, learners are
 - better prepared to perform well on task-based assessment activities, such as literacy assessments, demonstrations, and on-the-job assessments
 - more aware of the applicability of their learning and their capacity to use literacy in authentic and meaningful settings

¹ “Some Contemporary Trends in Adult Literacy from an International Perspective,” accessed from: www.iiz-dvv.de/index.php?article_id=471&clang=1 on March 1, 2011.

- better able to recognize goal completion and their readiness to transition out of the LBS Program
6. **The OALCF Levels are informed by the same factors that drive task complexity at the Essential Skills Levels 1, 2, and 3.** Because the three OALCF Levels are informed by the same factors that drive task complexity in Essential Skills (ES) Levels 1, 2, and 3, LBS practitioners can draw upon the wealth of Essential Skills-related information and resources to enhance their programs. Resources are available both provincially and nationally. Two important sources are
- the Ontario Skills Passport/Passepost - Competences de l'Ontario website at <http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSPWeb/jsp/en/login.jsp>
 - the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada website at <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/>
7. **A task-based approach provides familiar language to describe the performance of everyday tasks.** The Curriculum Framework supports the use of a common, easily understood language that stakeholders can use when referring clients.

What Are the Key Elements of a Task-Based Program?

A task-based program is comprised of the following six key elements:

1. the learner's short-term and long-term goals
2. contextualization
3. the requirements of the learner's goal
4. goal-related tasks
5. task-based assessment
6. the Learner Plan

Learner's short-term and long-term goals

A learner's *short-term goal* is the goal the learner will achieve while in the LBS Program. The short-term goal describes what the learner will be able to do at the end of his or her involvement with the LBS delivery organization. On the other hand, a learner's *long-term goal* is the learner's goal path, where the learner wants to go, or transition to, after the LBS Program. Within the OALCF, the five goal paths are

1. Employment
2. Apprenticeship
3. Secondary School Credit
4. Postsecondary
5. Independence

A learner's short-term and long-term goals should

- be set by the learner with help from the practitioner, where necessary

- be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely
- consider the learner’s current knowledge, skills, and behaviours
- be detailed in a Learner Plan so that instructional objectives are clear
- be monitored for learner progress and revised, when necessary
- include, when available, milestone tasks as key indicators of progress

Contextualization

Context is a significant factor in developing appropriate programming for learners. The contexts of culture, language, and goal influence program content, tasks, and delivery. The LBS Program focuses on the literacy needs of four cultural and linguistic groups: anglophone, Deaf, francophone, and Native. Since cultural and linguistic contexts shape a learner’s knowledge, experience, values, and norms, these contexts must be considered to maximize learner success.

For additional information about cultural considerations for each of the four cultural and linguistic groups, please read *Supplemental Tasks for Practitioners*

(http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Supplemental_Tasks_Mar_11.pdf), accessible from the “Understanding the Curriculum Framework” page on the OALCF website.

Requirements of the learner’s goal

The context of the learner’s goal path involves understanding the particular requirements of the learner’s next-step destination—critical information for developing culminating tasks to prepare learners to transition successfully. Contextualization is present when you ensure that tasks are both culturally and linguistically appropriate and are directly related to the learner’s goal.

Goal-related tasks

Goal-related tasks are learning activities that reflect actual literacy use and purposes. For example, goal paths leading to further education and training require a particular concentration on skills development to equip learners for the demands of an academic learning environment. For these goal paths, tasks will focus on activities that support life as a successful student. Examples of goal-related tasks linked to student success include

- taking notes from a lecture
- preparing for tests and exams
- conducting research
- working with other students on a project
- locating the right resources in a library

The employment goal path, as another example, will have tasks that focus on activities supporting life as a successful worker. Tasks that might link to a worker’s success include

- finding information from a wide range of document types
- writing short notes to explain or provide instructions
- reading spatial diagrams

Task-based assessment

Task-based assessment evaluates the learning that has occurred through task-based instruction. Task-based assessment

- includes authentic materials, such as graphs or charts
- is based on authentic applications—something a learner would actually do in the world outside the LBS Program
- requires performance that is measurable

Please read *Selected Assessment Tools*

(http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Selected_Assessment_Tools_Mar_11.pdf)

accessible from the “Linking Assessment to the OALCF” page on the OALCF website, for more information about task-based assessment and assessment, in general.

The Learner Plan

The development of an effective Learner Plan depends upon accurate goal setting and your ability to select or develop appropriate tasks related to the learner’s short-term goal. The Learner Plan describes the learning that will prepare a learner for her or his next steps. It

- specifies the learner’s goal path, or long-term goal
- includes key indicators of goal achievement, or the learner’s short-term goal
- includes key indicators of the learner’s readiness to transition
- identifies required learner supports, service coordination, or referrals
- details program elements, such as tasks and the related development of skills, knowledge, and behaviours necessary for the learner to achieve her or his short-term goal
- maps out how the instructional elements will be met in the time the learner can commit
- identifies an assessment strategy
- provides information for tracking learner progress—information that corresponds to the requirements of the learner’s short-term goal

How Do You Develop a Task-Based Program?

Developing a task-based program involves setting clearly stated goals, selecting or developing tasks, and delivering integrated training, while taking into account other learner requirements.

Defining a task

Within the OALCF, a *task* is an activity that has a particular purpose and an authentic application. For example, you may ask a learner to

- discuss with other learners lecture notes on the different causes of foodborne illnesses
- fill out an application form for an apartment rental
- create a study schedule to prepare for a Certificate of Qualification exam

- Meet with the college financial aid representative to find out the eligibility criteria and application process for an Ontario student loan
- check her or his work schedule to confirm days, times, and assigned duties

Typically, tasks have the following two essential elements:

1. a specified action or activity – what a person is asked to do
2. a stated purpose or anticipated outcome – why a person is asked to perform the task

Example

Task	Scan a work order to locate a customer's contact information
Action or Activity	Scan
Purpose	Locating a customer's contact information

In the above task statement, both the action and purpose are stated explicitly. However, in the task statement below, the purpose of the task is not stated, but it is clearly implied.

Example

Task	Find the expiry date on a coupon
Action or Activity	Find
Purpose	The purpose is not explicitly stated, however, it is easy to figure out: you want to know if you can still use a coupon to get a discount

Authenticity is an important consideration when identifying tasks related to a learner's goal path. To determine authenticity, ask the question "*Is this activity something a learner would actually do outside the classroom?*" If the answer is "Yes," then the task is authentic.

Levelling a task

Tasks can be levelled. The key to analyzing the level of task complexity is understanding the scale being used. For the OALCF, a task can be levelled by examining both the task descriptors and the performance descriptors in the curriculum framework. When levelling a task, you have to consider both performance and task criteria together.

Tasks developed for instructional purposes often behave in a more predictable manner; authentic tasks do not always align with all criteria. However, whether the task is developed or authentic, a strong pull usually exists towards one level or the next.

Example tasks included in the curriculum framework are written to demonstrate end-of-level performance. They provide examples to help you determine the level of a task.

Setting clearly stated goals

The development of quality task-based programming starts with effective goal setting. When using a task-based approach, there must be a clearly stated goal from which meaningful and appropriate tasks can be identified. If a learner’s goal is not clear, goal setting becomes the learner’s first program activity. Goal setting, part of a goal-directed assessment process, drives the development of the learner’s program. It helps the learner and you identify and clarify:

- the learner’s goal path, or long-term goal—where the learner wants to go after exiting the literacy program
- the learner’s goal, or short-term goal—what the learner wants to accomplish by coming to a literacy program
- goal completion—what the learner will be able to do that demonstrates a readiness to transition
- goal-related tasks—the tasks the learner will focus on in the program as well as the skills, knowledge, and behaviours required for task completion
- gaps you have identified during initial and ongoing assessment—the skills, knowledge, and behaviours needed by the learner to achieve her or his goal
- cultural considerations—what differences exist between the learner’s cultural and linguistic strengths and the cultural and linguistic environment of the learner’s chosen goal path

Goal setting with learners is already firmly embedded in LBS practice, and most agencies have their own policies and procedures related to it. The following chart summarizes the main steps in a goal-directed assessment process leading to the development of the Learner Plan.

Goal-directed assessment process

Step for Practitioners	What this Step Accomplishes
<p>Step 1 Gather background information on the learner’s</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educational experience • work experience • transferable skills • preferred learning style • obstacles and challenges <p>Through the assessment process, gather as much information as you can to inform your decisions about the learner’s program plan.</p>	<p>Step 1 tells you whether or not your program can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build upon the learner’s identified strengths and transferable skills • deal with obstacles and challenges that may seriously affect learner progress and persistence <p>If your program does not currently meet either of the above conditions, you will need to determine how to best accommodate the learner’s needs. For example, you may be able to accommodate the learner through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports offered by your agency or supports you can facilitate through other providers • a referral to another LBS delivery agency in your community, an agency better able to meet the learner’s needs

Step for Practitioners	What this Step Accomplishes
<p>Step 2 Identify the learner's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long-term goal, achievable after the LBS Program • short-term goal, achievable in the LBS Program 	<p>Step 2 tells you what the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learner's goal path is • learner will be able to do at the end of the LBS Program
<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the requirements of the learner's goal • Identify important indicators of task performance for accountability purposes 	<p>Step 3 identifies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • goal-related tasks necessary for successful goal completion • the complexity level of each task • the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required for successful task performance • any required skills development • the cultural and linguistic requirements of the goal path • any non-LBS Program credentials, certificates, tests, or personal attributes required by the learner to transition to the long-term goal
<p>Step 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the learner's achievements and current capacity to complete goal-related task 	<p>Step 4 identifies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • goal-related tasks the learner can already perform • tasks that will become the learning focus • important embedded skills, knowledge, and behaviours required to perform goal-related tasks
<p>Step 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create the Learner Plan 	<p>Step 5 produces a plan that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summarizes the information from Steps 1 to 4 • lays out the action plan for learning • provides a way to monitor learner progress • identifies estimated program duration based on the learner's commitment to participation

Selecting or developing tasks

When you are selecting or developing tasks for curriculum planning or assessment purposes, ask the following key questions:

- *“Does this task make sense for this learner, given all that I know about this person’s background, culture, present life situation, and current abilities?”*
- *“Does a clear connection exist between this task and the learner’s chosen goal path?”*
- *“Does this task represent a significant chunk of learning?”*
- *“Can this task be broken down into a number of smaller tasks for program planning?”*
- *“Are all the individual tasks necessary for goal completion at the appropriate level of complexity for this learner?”*
- *“Given what I know about this learner, will she or he be able to perform this task within the timeframe he or she has committed to the program?”*

Selecting a task

Sources that can help you select appropriate tasks include

- your own bank of resources that contains task-based activities related to particular goals
- previously developed LBS Program materials and resources that support specific goals of further education and training, employment, or independence
- independent research that answers the question *“What do people need to be able to do to be successful in (a particular area)?”*

Developing a task using the Curriculum Framework

Practitioners can use the curriculum framework to

- develop a task
- help point to the embedded knowledge, skills, and behaviours for successful task completion

Illustrated below is one approach to developing a task.

Step 1: Consider the learner’s goal. The learner’s long-term goal (goal path) and short-term goal (what the learner will learn to do as a result of participating in the LBS Program) work together to shape the particular tasks, competencies, and knowledge, skills, and behaviours that will become the focus of the learner’s program.

Instructor: A learner has identified Secondary School Credit as her goal path. She has told me that her short-term goal is to “perform tasks related to success as a student in Secondary School Credit.”

Step 2: Consider the learner’s performance on tasks. Through initial assessment, you will gain some understanding of the knowledge, skills, and behaviours a learner brings to the LBS Program, and this understanding tells you what levels of tasks are appropriate for the learner.

Instructor: The learner’s performance during initial assessment shows that she can perform some tasks at OALCF Level 1 and some at OALCF Level 2. Therefore, her program will include tasks at both levels, but it will focus on OALCF Level 1 tasks first.

Step 3: Identify the primary competencies that are associated with goal completion. All competencies are necessary for success in whatever goal path the learner chooses. However, while all competencies are important, they are not all involved in every goal-related task. Furthermore, for those competencies involved in specific goal-related tasks, not all are of equal importance. Based on the requirements of the task, certain competencies will be more critical to overall success than others. You will, therefore, want to look first at the competencies that are most strongly linked to successful goal completion.

Review the six competencies and select those that clearly have a strong connection to the learner’s goal. As learners move closer either to goal completion or to transitioning to the next steps, integrated tasks will likely become more complex and include two or more of the following OALCF competencies:

- *A. Find and Use Information*
- *B. Communicate Ideas and Information*
- *C. Understand and Use Numbers*
- *D. Use Digital Technology*
- *E. Manage Learning*
- *F. Engage with Others*

The questions to ask are

- “Which of these competencies play a strong role in achieving goal completion or transition?”
- “What is the appropriate level of task complexity for this learner?”

Instructor: The learner is extremely shy and tends to avoid talking with others. Since credit programming is increasing its emphasis on group work, tasks related to *Competency B. Communicate Ideas and Information* and *Competency F. Engage with Others* would be a good starting point. We will begin with tasks at OALCF Level 1.

Step 4: Select a task group

Having identified one or more competencies, choose one competency to start with and examine the task groups that accompany it. The question to ask is, “Which of these task groups are clearly related to the learner’s goal completion?” The answer to that question will help you select a particular task group, setting the stage for designing a task.

Instructor: The learner and I selected *Competency B. Communicate ideas and Information* and task group *B1. Interact with others*.

Step 5: Consult the curriculum framework to learn more about the tasks for the task group *Interact with others* at Level 1. The introduction to *Competency B. Communicate Ideas and Information* provides an overview for three Levels of the task group *Interact with others* and describes how tasks from that group are used in the real world. This description helps confirm the connection between the task group and what is needed for goal completion. The *indicator overview* along with *example tasks* and the *supplemental tasks* provide ideas for the kinds of tasks you can develop.

Instructor: The Introduction to *Competency B. Communicate Ideas and Information* states that the task group *Interact with others* examines the ways in which adults come together to exchange information, explain and discuss ideas, and share opinions—confirming that I have made the correct connection between *interacting with others* and the learner’s short-term goal.

The *Indicator Overview* for *Interact with others* is “participate in brief interactions to exchange information with one other person.” This overview provides some insight into the appropriate nature of the task at OALCF Level 1—a brief interaction with one other person.

The interaction types described are appropriate OALCF Level 1 interactions—exchange information, give instructions, provide directions, or state preferences. The learner and I think that the learner’s task should deal with giving instructions.

Step 6: Consult *task descriptors* for criteria to determine the complexity level of the task. Examining the task descriptors at all three OALCF Levels increases your appreciation of the differences in task complexity and helps ensure the task you are developing fits and stays within the appropriate criteria.

Instructor: The task descriptors provided key criteria for an OALCF Level 1 task: *Tell another learner how to get to the computer lab.* I know this task would be appropriate because it meets most of the criteria.

Criteria	Met	How do you know?
Scope of task is limited	√	Directions involve a few simple steps such as, turn right, go downstairs, turn left, and look for the sign on the door
Involves one other person	√	Only one person is involved
Is brief	√	Task involves only a few directions
Addresses a familiar audience	√	Learner knows the person
Contains concrete and familiar content	√	Learner already knows how to get to the computer lab
Has a highly explicit purpose		Purpose is clear, but implied
Is informal	√	In real life, task would probably be part of a casual conversation

STEP 7: Check performance descriptors to identify what constitutes successful task performance and to increase your understanding of task complexity. Performance descriptors may also stimulate ideas for instructional activities.

Instructor: The performance descriptors gave me ideas for programming and assessment.

Task: Tell another learner how to get to the computer lab		
Performance Descriptors The learner:	What to look for in the learner's performance	Instructional activities and strategies (orally-based, as much as possible)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conveys information on familiar topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the learner know how to get to the computer lab? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorm with learners to make a list of common requests for directions. Include locations within and near the learning centre.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows an awareness of factors, such as social, linguistic, and cultural differences that affect interactions in brief exchanges with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the learner adjust delivery to accommodate differences? For example, can she use some new terms or change the pace of delivery? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss social, cultural, and linguistic differences to consider when communicating with others; use role playing to model differences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chooses appropriate language in exchanges with clearly defined purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the learner use a tone that shows interest and is respectful? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the learner to observe her own and others' interactions (in the cafeteria, mall, etc.) and report back.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participates in short, simple exchanges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the learner engage comfortably in simple, short exchanges? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the learner work with a partner on a pull-from-the-hat Q&A exercise to practice simple, short exchanges.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives short, straightforward instructions or directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the learner provide directions that follow a logical sequence? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate the importance of sequence in giving directions by using good and poor examples.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaks or signs clearly in a focused and organized way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the learner enunciate or sign clearly? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate the importance of clear enunciation or signing by using good and poor examples; have the learner read aloud or sign.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeats or questions to confirm understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the learner have ways to clarify directions if the classmate asks questions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorm with learners to identify strategies to confirm understanding in daily conversation. Use role-playing to practise different strategies.

Task: Tell another learner how to get to the computer lab		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses and interprets non-verbal cues, such as body language, facial expressions, and gestures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the learner respond to body language or facial expressions? • Can the learner explain anything she notices about other people's body language or facial expressions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use photos or TV clips without sound to help learners interpret facial expressions and gestures. • Have learners develop vocabulary to describe expressions and try a simple emotional intelligence quiz.

Helping you select and develop tasks

The Curriculum Framework and other OALCF tools provide a number of important supports for a task-based program. You can access most of these resources from the “Understanding the Curriculum Framework” page of the OALCF website.

1. Example tasks

Example tasks have been developed for each task group within each competency in the curriculum framework. Example tasks

- illustrate how the indicators, task descriptors, and performance descriptors at each of three levels can be recognized within individual tasks
- are limited in scope and focus on one level of indicators
- represent end-of-level tasks

How do example tasks help?

When you select or create tasks, example tasks can help confirm decisions you have made about

- situating the task within the competencies and task groups
- the complexity level of the task
- locating similar or related tasks
- the relationship of the task to the goal path

2. Supplemental tasks

Supplemental tasks are additional tasks organized by culture and language (anglophone, Deaf, francophone, and Native), competency, and level of task complexity. These tasks describe what a learner can do within a Level. Included are notes on cultural considerations for each of the four cultural and linguistic groups. You can access *Supplemental Tasks for Practitioners* (http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Supplemental_Tasks_Mar_11.pdf) from the “Understanding the Curriculum Framework” page of the OALCF website.

How do supplemental tasks help?

When you are looking for additional ideas of tasks related to a competency, task group, complexity level, or cultural group, supplemental tasks and notes on cultural considerations provide excellent guidance.

3. Integrated tasks

Integrated tasks are multi-layered tasks that involve a number of competencies, task groups, and tasks at various levels of complexity. However, an integrated task can easily be broken down into its component parts and tasks, each representing a significant chunk of learning.

Integrated tasks give learners practice in applying a wide range of skills, knowledge, and behaviours in ways that reflect authentic use. For example, an integrated task might be

- Plan a camping trip for the family
- Prepare for a job interview
- Put up a display in the local community centre to promote reading as a family
- Put together a portfolio of information to prepare for registering for an Apprenticeship program
- Prepare for a PLAR (Prior Learning and Recognition) assessment
- Create a filing system for organizing household bills and important papers

Because of the multi-layered and multi-tasked nature of integrated tasks, it is a very complex undertaking to level and assess them in a standardized way. They can, however, still play a very important role in making learners feel more confident that they are making progress or are ready to exit their literacy programs and transition to their next steps.

How do integrated tasks show learner progress?

Integrated tasks can be used throughout the learner's program as a means of organizing learning and of recognizing progress. The various components inherent in integrated tasks can be separated to reveal the smaller, individual tasks involved; these individual tasks can then become the focus of day-to-day training. An integrated task that is comprised of smaller tasks plus related learning activities is a learner-friendly way to outline the program elements of the Learner Plan. The learner's ability to perform an integrated task related to his or her short-term goal is a strong indicator of successful goal completion and the learner's readiness to transition.

For some learners, particularly learners who are struggling with tasks at the lowest levels and who need to focus primarily on building a foundation of skills, tasks reflecting the short-term goal and goal completion can be simple tasks that can be broken down into component parts for the purpose of focusing on skills development.

4. Integrated tasks by goal path

Real-world tasks are not always simple, single-focused activities. Many tasks call upon a number of competencies and task groups in combination for successful learner performance. Five examples of how integrated tasks can be put into action for all goal paths are accessible from the "Purpose of the OALCF" page of the OALCF website. These *Integrated Tasks by Goal Path* (http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_integrated_tasks_Mar_11.pdf) provide meaningful examples of how tasks can be mapped to the competencies and task groups in the curriculum framework for the purpose of developing instructional activities in a task-based program. They also show how various task groups from different competencies work together in an integrated way.

Each of the five integrated tasks by goal path has an introduction, a description of the primary competency and task group involved, related competencies and task groups, and suggested activities.

5. Milestone tasks

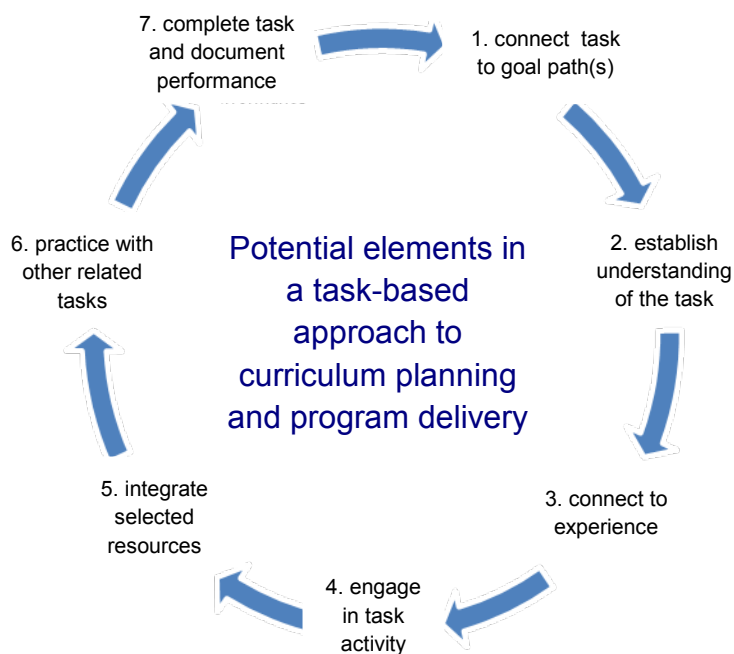
Milestone tasks will be ready for use in 2012. They will serve as a key indicator of learner progress towards goal completion for accountability purposes. For this reason, milestone tasks and the accompanying assessment activities will be standardized. Practitioners and learners will work together at the outset of the program to choose which milestone tasks the learner will perform to demonstrate progress towards achieving her or his stated goal. The selected milestone tasks will be included in the Learner Plan and will be one factor that informs program planning.

How will milestone tasks help?

Milestone tasks will provide practitioners with a fair, meaningful, and understandable way to assess and communicate learner progress towards goal completion. Task-based programming will provide learners with daily practice and preparation for this type of assessment.

Delivering integrated training

No one right way to approach content planning and program delivery exists in the LBS Program. The following diagram, however, suggests several possible components and one approach to sequencing events in the delivery of a task-based program. This diagram is intended to stimulate ideas; it is not meant to be prescriptive. In this example, the learner has established a short-term goal and the practitioner and learner have agreed on a task to focus on for training.



Dealing with other learner requirements

As identified in the goal-directed assessment process, a learner may have other requirements for successfully transitioning beyond literacy programming—requirements that are outside the LBS service provider’s control. For example, obtaining a driver’s license may be a requirement for the learner’s goal to work in the transportation industry; however, obtaining the license is beyond the mandate of the LBS Program and is not included in the understanding of goal completion.

The Learner Plan, however, will reference the recommended action so that any necessary referrals or service coordination can take place while the learner attends the LBS Program. Furthermore, the Learner Plan will document any actions taken or referrals made by the service provider regarding the additional requirements. Although service coordination is an important measure of program effectiveness, it is not a measure of goal completion.

How Do You Assess Learner Progress in a Task-Based Program?

In a task-based program, practitioners will want to determine whether or not learners can use the skills and competencies developed in the LBS Program by having the learners complete real-life tasks related to their goals. Task-based assessment results in a measurable performance or product. *Selected Assessment Tools*

(http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Selected_Assessment_Tools_Mar_11.pdf), accessible from the “Linking Assessment to the OALCF” page of the OALCF website, will provide you with numerous examples of task-based assessment tools.

Using milestone tasks

MTCU is currently developing progress indicators, or *milestone tasks*, for goal completion. Goal completion means that learners have achieved everything that they have identified on their LBS Learner Plan. The Learner Plan reflects what is relevant both to the individual needs of each learner and to her or his goal requirements for employment, further education and training, or independence.

Milestone tasks will provide the learner and practitioner with concrete information about learner progress toward identified goals. The tasks will

- reflect three levels of task complexity for each goal path
- reflect end-of-level performance
- appear on the Learner Plan

Learners will not be expected to perform every milestone task; they will only perform those tasks that are appropriate to their goal path and reflect what they need to focus on in the LBS Program. Furthermore, milestone tasks are not intended to become the sum total of a learner’s program; instead, they are intended to support program delivery by informing instructional content and by providing common criteria for tracking learner progress.

Selected for each learner, milestone tasks will also serve as indicators of learner progress towards goal completion on EOIS CaMS, the tool that LBS service providers will use for active case management to track the needs, programs, supports, attainments, and outcomes of literacy learners.

Understanding Task-based and Skills-based Approaches to Literacy Programming

The 1998 *LBS Working with Learning Outcomes Validation Draft*² helped you understand the development of literacy skills in three domains across the five LBS Levels that corresponded to the Ontario Curriculum grades 1 – 9. For internal purposes, practitioners will continue to find the LBS “Learning Outcomes” and the “Matrix” useful for a common understanding of skills development. The new Curriculum Framework within the OALCF, however, provides you with a way to understand and track a learner’s progress towards goal completion, based on the performance of tasks related to the learner’s goal.

While skills development remains a critical component of LBS programming, the shift in accountability practices emphasizes the learner’s ability to demonstrate increases in literacy use. To adequately support this increased emphasis on task performance, some LBS programs will require changes in their approach to literacy instruction. To identify areas where improvements can occur, you can review the following descriptions of task-based and skills-based approaches to literacy programming and then evaluate your program’s current practices. The goal is to identify what your agency’s current practices look like and, where necessary, to determine how to bring current practices into closer alignment with a task-based approach.

Program processes reflecting a predominantly task-based or a skills-based approach

In a task-based approach	In a skills-based approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A learner is assessed at intake, first using a range of task-based assessment tools and activities, such as demonstrations, and secondly, where necessary, skill-based activities that may involve math problems, a reading comprehension exercise, and a writing sample. Initial assessment provides an understanding of the learner’s ability to use existing literacy skills and competencies at particular levels of task complexity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A learner is assessed at intake to determine current skills and abilities. Assessment tools and methods may include demonstrations, math worksheets, a reading comprehension exercise, and a writing sample. The learner’s skills in reading, writing, and math are identified using LBS Levels. Initial assessment provides an understanding of what skills a learner has.

² Working with Learning Outcomes: Validation Draft; Literacy and Basic Skills Section, Workplace Preparation Branch, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, October 1998

In a task-based approach	In a skills-based approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With practitioner assistance, a learner identifies a goal path (long-term goal) and a short-term goal for learning. The practitioner then analyses the short-term goal to identify the predominant competencies involved, embedded tasks, and levels of task complexity. The practitioner looks for the embedded knowledge, skills, and behaviours necessary for successful task performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With practitioner assistance, a learner identifies long-term and short-term goals for learning. Learner goals are analyzed to identify the embedded skills and LBS skill Levels.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The practitioner works with the learner to develop a Learner Plan that includes the short-term goal and specific tasks necessary for goal completion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The practitioner works with the learner to develop the Learner Plan that includes the learner's short-term goal and the LBS Levels of the skills required to achieve the goal.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content planning begins and ends with goal-related tasks. Daily learning activities are selected or created to support the development of the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required by each particular task and other similar tasks at the same or lower complexity level. Additional goal-related tasks are included for practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content planning begins with the learner's starting point on the continuum of skills acquisition and ends with skill levels required by the learner's goal. Instructional strategies and learning activities are based on the learner's particular needs and the practitioner's own bank of skill-building resources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The practitioner integrates selected materials from a variety of sources to develop necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviours and to strengthen task performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For future demonstration development, the practitioner gathers sample and authentic materials that are related to the learner's goal and require reading, writing, or math.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill-building activities are introduced when the lack of component skills interferes with successful task performance. As quickly as possible, the focus returns to the performance of tasks and the learner continues with task-based activities, completing tasks until goal completion has been achieved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the learner acquires the necessary skills, the practitioner introduces authentic goal-related materials and task activities that show the learner's increased skill acquisition. Tasks are usually selected based on their ability to showcase particular discrete skills at particular levels.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The practitioner tracks progress through ongoing assessment of the learner's performance of goal-related tasks. As the learner completes more complex tasks, progress towards the requirements of the goal become evident. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The practitioner monitors skill acquisition through ongoing assessment that may include quizzes, tests, exams, and demonstrations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasks related to the learner's goals measure and track learner progress. Goal completion is recognized when the learner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrations measure and track learner progress. Results focus on the learning outcomes in the demonstration activity and

In a task-based approach	In a skills-based approach
<p>can successfully complete all tasks identified in her or his Learner Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2012, milestone tasks will be identified by goal path and will provide a standardized way to communicate learner progress. 	<p>point to progress made within or across LBS Levels. Goal completion is recognized when the learner demonstrates skills at the Levels identified on the Learner Plan.</p>

Skills development within a task-based approach

Tasks are built on a solid foundation of component skills. Component skills, sometimes referred to as academic skills, are those discrete skills a learner acquires along a continuum of skills development. These skills build proficiency in, for example, reading, writing, or math. The “Matrix” in the “Appendix” of the *Working with Learning Outcomes Validation Draft* contains a collection of academic skills described across five LBS Levels.

Skills are integral to the successful performance of the multitude of tasks that adults carry out. In almost every situation, successful task performance is dependent upon some necessary background knowledge, a good understanding of expectations related to appropriate behaviours, and the mastery of the embedded skills. Skills and tasks are interdependent; they work hand in hand. Skills enable task completion; tasks enable goal completion.

Tasks or skills—which come first?

In task-based programming, goal-related tasks always come first. As learners choose their goal path, task-based assessment reveals the kinds of tasks and levels of task complexity that will be part of the learner’s program. Practitioners will select tasks that seem appropriate for the first steps. If the learner’s performance on any task reveals a deficiency in embedded skills, the learner and you step back from the task to work on skills. You provide the necessary instruction and skill-building activities, but always point to how skills development positively affects how skills are used. It is always *task-to-skills-to-task*.

Striking the right balance between tasks and skills

Choices regarding the appropriate amount of time to devote to skills development and task performance will vary from program to program. However, some factors that can affect your choices include

- the learner’s goal path
- the learner’s proficiency
- targeted programming

The **learner’s goal path** reveals where the learner wants to go - or transition to - after his or her literacy program. For example, if the learner’s long-term goal is related to Apprenticeship, Secondary School Credit, or Postsecondary, she or he will require particular concentration on skills development to be equipped for the demands of the next academic learning environment. Finding the right balance between skill-building and task-based activities for learners heading to further education and training will depend on the:

- level of background knowledge and skills the learner has already acquired
- knowledge and skills still to be acquired within the allotted time frame

- amount of time the learner can commit to the program
- learner's pace of learning
- relative importance of particular tasks to overall success in the next learning environment
- learner's knowledge, understanding, and proficiency regarding tasks that support success

By contrast, a learner with a long-term goal of independence or employment will likely spend more time on task-based activities.

The **learner's proficiency** can be another determining factor. During intake and initial assessment, you may discover, through the learner's performance of tasks, that she or he has gaps in skills development. If the learner is struggling to complete tasks at basic complexity levels, it may mean that some particular skills are lacking. In that case, you may decide to use a skills-based assessment tool to gather more detailed information about the learner's skill development. For learners working at lower literacy levels, considerable time will be devoted to building an adequate foundation of skills, but tasks will still play a key part. Skills always support tasks. So, even at basic levels, authentic tasks will bring meaning to skills development and provide concrete evidence to the learner of progress towards goal completion.

Targeted programming, developed to meet specific needs in the community, is a third determining factor in the ratio of time spent on skills compared to time spent on tasks. Programs advertising increased skill proficiency for a particular purpose will naturally emphasize skills development, even though a purpose has been identified. Short courses available online or in print to prepare learners for a GED course or to improve a skill for a particular work setting are examples of targeted programming that may emphasize skills development.

Programs that market to clients interested in a specific job or in preparing for job-specific training usually organize curricula in relation to the various tasks required in that particular occupation. There are many examples of modules that prepare learners for specific jobs, such as a skilled trades helper, a personal support worker, or a retail clerk.

The web links in this guide are valid as of March 1, 2011