



**Atlantic Evaluation and
Research Consultants**

**Evaluation of the
Adult Basic Education (ABE) Level I Pilot Project**

**Final Report Submitted to the
Department of Education**

December 21, 2004

Atlantic Evaluation and Research Consultants
79 Cherry Lane
Conception Bay South NL
A1W 3B4

Phone (709) 834-5288
Cell (709) 685-1143
Fax (709) 834-5383
E-mail bcrocker@nl.rogers.com

Executive Summary

Background

This report is submitted as part of the requirements of a contract with the Department of Education for an evaluation of a two-year Adult Basic Education (ABE) Level I Pilot Project now under way at nine sites throughout the province.

The specific objectives of the ABE Level I Pilot are to:

1. test the program delivery model over a two-year period
2. identify partners that will support a sustainable approach to program delivery for ABE Level I and strengthen partnerships within communities
3. increase program accessibility for adult students by opening ABE Level I sites throughout the province
4. collect information on student needs throughout the province and identify barriers faced by students in meeting these needs. Solutions to overcoming these barriers are also to be explored.

Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation was to examine the effectiveness of the program delivery model in meeting these goals. The evaluation focussed particularly on the appropriateness of the program and the learning environment in meeting the needs of the students, the change in the student/teacher ratio from 6/1 to 12/1, the effectiveness of the partnership arrangements at the local sites, access and recruitment and barriers to participation and success.

Methods

The evaluation was based on an adaptation of a framework developed by Literacy British Columbia and used in previous studies in this province. The main methods used in the evaluation were site visits and interviews with staff and sponsors, a student survey, analysis of administrative records and key informant interviews involving Department of Education and other government officials.

Highlights of Findings

1. Of a total of 118 students enrolled in the program in 2003-04, 32% had completed, 39% had left without completing and 29% were still in the program in September, 2004.
2. Reported barriers to completion were more frequently related to family and financial circumstances than to the program itself.
3. A total of 19 students or 17% were identified as having moved on to higher levels of ABE by Fall, 2004.
4. Several of the sites have had difficulty in recruiting sufficient students to make up a full class of 12. On the other hand, a few sites in large communities could have taken more students had resources been available.
5. Students ages were distributed fairly evenly across the range from 20 to more than 50 years. Almost all had completed more than elementary school. About 60% were single with main income source being social assistance at a level less than \$10,000 in the past year. Almost all had worked at some time, with about one-third having worked immediately before entering the ABE program.
6. A majority of students attended for more than 100 days in 2003-04. Completion rates were considerably higher for those attending more than 50 days than for those attending fewer days. Attendance rates varied across centres but were generally in the 80% range.
7. Complete data on achievement gains were available for only a few students. The average gain on the Brigance Inventory from the first to the sixth and last reporting period was 2.7 grade levels for reading comprehension, 2.3 grade levels for word recognition, 1.9 grade levels for mathematics and 1.4 grade levels for spelling.
8. Satisfaction rates with all aspects of the program were very high compared to what we have seen in other studies of this nature. Most students felt that they had done better than they expected and all reported that they would recommend the program to others.
9. Instructors gave mixed reviews to the provincial program guide, the professional development opportunities and the Brigance Inventory.
10. Most instructors were of the view that the package of materials provided by the Department of Education is inadequate. Experienced instructors in established centres reported having accumulated a good inventory of instructional resources over the years. New centres had more difficulty in acquiring needed resources. The ability

to purchase instructional materials is closely related to rental charges which, in some cases, absorbed most of the funds available beyond the salary allocation

11. Key informants were of the view that the new 12/1 student/teacher ratio is appropriate. Instructors generally thought this to be too high. Only a few instructors had experience with a full class of 12 students. Most students were satisfied with the ratio. However, again not all had experienced a full class.
12. Almost sites are governed and administered by some community agency. In a couple of cases, the instructors are effectively the administrators. Beyond this, there are few identifiable partnership arrangements and almost no indication of financial support beyond the contract amount from the Department of Education.
13. About half the centres made some use of volunteers. Some indicated that volunteers were not needed because of small numbers.
14. While most centres indicated that they were flexible enough to address a range of student abilities and disabilities, there was considerable concern that many students coming to ABE Level I have learning disabilities that are not being well diagnosed there is no provision in the program for diagnosis and treatment of specific learning disabilities and instructors do not have access to school records.
15. All centres met the minimum requirements established by the Department of Education for ABE certification. However, our impression is that many facilities are marginal and would be crowded for a full class of 12.

Overall Assessment

An overall assessment of the program was given, using categories derived from an earlier reviews of best practices in ABE. The program was judged to be relatively good in the areas of stability of programming, financial support, staffing, ability to meet some of the personal and financial obstacles faced by students and professional development for staff.

Lower ratings were given for recruitment, matching of program to student needs, stakeholder support, achievement and attainment targets. Relative to other ABE programs we have seen and evaluated, this program is about as good as can be expected, given the financial, recruitment, facility and other constraints.

One major issue identified was the viability of some of the centres in light of recruitment problems. The opposite was also true in some cases, with centres being unable to meet all demand. This indicates an imbalance in site locations relative to demand or a mismatch of perceived need to actual demand. Given the nature of the clientele, the inability to diagnose and treat learning disabilities is a major concern for this and most similar programs. Limitations of record-keeping and reporting and the potential for conflict of interest when the instructor is also the administrator and prime leader in ABE in a community, while more minor in nature, are also sources of concern. Should this type of

program continue beyond the pilot stage, it is recommended that terms of reference and contracts be amended to address these concerns.

Acknowledgments

This report could not have been completed without the participation of a large number of people. We are especially grateful to instructors, local administrators and students who provided the core data for the evaluation by responding to the interviews and surveys. Officials of the Department of Education and the Department of Human Resources Labour and Employment were also generous with their time in responding to questions and requests for data.

The study also benefitted from the feedback on methodology and on the draft report provided by members the Advisory Committee. We are especially pleased to acknowledge the contributions of Cindy Christopher and Pamela Dawe. Both were free in sharing their experience and insight into the issues under review.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	v
I INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
Evaluation Issues and Questions	2
Other Related Issues	5
Formative Versus Summative Evaluation	5
II METHODOLOGY	7
Evaluation Framework	7
Document and Literature Review	10
Analysis of Administrative Data	10
Key Informant and Staff Interviews	11
Site Visits	12
Client Survey	12
III THE PILOT PROGRAM AND ITS CONTEXT	15
The Policy Context	15
The Current Pilot Program	16
Best Practices	20
IV SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW RESPONSES	23
Goals, Objectives and Planning	23
Needs Assessment and Program Goals	23
Long Term Plans	24
Site Policies	24
Recruitment, Access and Completion	25
Demand and Student Recruitment	25
Hours of Operation	26
Attendance	26
Barriers to Participation	27
Program Completion	28

Facilities and Equipment	28
Ownership and Rent	28
Adequacy	29
The Program	30
The Provincial Program Guide	30
Instructional Materials and Strategies	31
Student/Instructor Ratio	31
Governance and Administration	32
Governance	32
Administrative Structure	33
Partnerships	33
Staff	34
Professional Development	35
Use of Volunteers	35
Finances	36
Assessment	36
Brigance Inventory	36
Other Student Assessments	37
Recognition of Completion	37
Program Evaluation	38
Attention to Diversity	38
V THE STUDENTS	41
Participation and Completion	41
Student Profile	43
Reasons for Taking the Program	43
Program Participation and Attendance	46
Student Performance and Progress	48
Completion	51
Perceptions of the Program	51
Activities Since Leaving the Program	52
VI ANALYSIS	55
Objective 1: Effectiveness of the Program Delivery Model.	55

Issue 1.1	55
Issue 1.2	56
Issue 1.3	59
Issue 1.4	59
Objective 2: Partnerships	62
Issue 2.1	62
Objective 3. Increase program accessibility for adult students	64
Issue 3.1	64
Objective 4: Student Needs and Barriers	65
Issue 4.1	66
Overall Assessment	68
Some Concerns	70
References	73
Appendix A: Client Survey Instrument	
Appendix B: Interview Protocol: Site Level	

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table

1. Site Locations and Sponsor Background	18
2. Iowa State ABE Performance Indicators	22
3. Summary of Enrollment, Completion and Continuation	42
4. Educational Background of 2003-04 Students	44
5. Profile of 2003-04 Students	44
6. Reasons for Taking the Program	45
7. Completion Rate by Days of Student Participation	47
8. Attendance Rates by Centre	47
9. Summary of Brigance Results: Six Week Reporting Periods	49
10. Gains from First to Sixth and Second to fifth Reporting Periods	50
11. Student Reported Reasons for Non-Completion	51
12. Perceptions of Success and Recommendations to Others	52
13. Activities Since Leaving the Program	53
14. Program and Unit Costs, 2003-04	60
15. Overall Assessment of Pilot Based on Best Practices Categories	68

Figure

1	53
---------	----

I INTRODUCTION

Background

This report is submitted as part of the requirements of a contract with the Department of Education for an evaluation of the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Level I Pilot Project now under way at nine sites throughout the province.

The Pilot Project is a two-year initiative for full-time students in Newfoundland and Labrador over the age of 18 years old with skills measuring less than a Grade 7 education level. The project began in September, 2003 as a joint initiative of the Division of Adult Learning and Literacy, Department of Education and the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). It was designed and is overseen by the ABE Level I Working Group representing the literacy community, government departments/agencies and the private sector. The project is funded by the National Literacy Secretariat and the Department of Education.

The specific objectives of the ABE Level I Pilot, as given in the Terms of Reference are to:¹

1. test the program delivery model over a two-year period
2. identify partners that will support a sustainable approach to program delivery for ABE Level I and strengthen partnerships within communities
3. increase program accessibility for adult students by opening ABE Level I sites throughout the province
4. collect information on student needs throughout the province and identify barriers faced by students in meeting these needs. Solutions to overcoming these barriers are also to be explored.

¹These have been slightly modified from the Terms of Reference and numbered to conform to the numbering system used for the specific research questions.

Evaluation Issues and Questions

The Terms of Reference identified seven issues, based on principles and practices underlying the Pilot Project Model. These were followed by a total of 29 questions to be addressed in the evaluation, classified under the objectives and issues identified. These questions have been numbered here by objective and issue for consistency in reference throughout the report.

Objective 1: Test the effectiveness of the program delivery model.

1.1 A successful ABE Level I delivery site must help adult students achieve their individual educational goals in a physical site appropriate to adult learning; a learning environment that is safe and respectful of adults learners; and, curriculum that is relevant and practical and includes age-appropriate resources and instruction.

- 1.1.1. Was the physical environment appropriate for the adult learner?
- 1.1.2. Did students feel that they were treated with respect as adult students in this environment?
- 1.1.3. Did the students feel that all of their learning needs were met?
- 1.1.4. Did the instructors feel that there were appropriate adult materials available to support the ABE Level I program?
- 1.1.5. Were instructors able to easily access additional resources as necessary?

1.2. Historically, professional development opportunities for ABE instructors outside the provincial college system, has been limited. Before and during the 2-year pilot period, a number of professional development days were provided to all site instructors to prepare them to deliver this new program.

- 1.2.1. Has the delivery partner implemented adequate monitoring processes to ensure teaching and curriculum quality are optimum?
- 1.2.2. Did the partners feel that the prescribed instructor qualifications were sufficient?
- 1.2.3. Did the instructors feel that the professional development opportunities provided to them were valuable and enhanced their ability to deliver the ABE Level I program?
- 1.2.4. Did the instructors feel prepared to deliver the new program, as outlined.

1.3. With the exception of administering the CAAT to determine readiness for

admission into Level II, testing/monitoring of students in ABE Level I programs had been ad hoc. Adults interested in joining this pilot were first assessed using the Brigance Inventory of Essential Skills. If then accepted into the program, regularly scheduled Brigance testing continued. The Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (CARA) tool was also provided to the sites as a supplementary testing tool for reading/writing miscue analysis and placement, if needed.

- 1.3.1. Do instructors feel Brigance assessment is an accurate tool for student skills measurement?
- 1.3.2. Are appropriate monitoring mechanisms in place to follow clients through the process and track academic progress?
- 1.4. The student-instructor ratio for Levels II and III ABE has always been higher than that required for Level I. This pilot increased the ratio for Level I from 6:1 to 12:1. Increasing the ratio would make the program more accessible to more students and the program would be more cost efficient. To facilitate the transition to Levels II/III it was necessary to explore a Level I ratio which would be high enough to ease students' transition to more independent study, and yet not be so high as to deprive students of one-to-one instructor attention often needed at this level.
 - 1.4.1. Did students feel the ratio of 12:1 was adequate to address their learning needs?
 - 1.4.2. What is the overall cost of delivering the pilot project and the average cost per student?
 - 1.4.3. Did students and instructors feel the program outcomes could be realized with this higher instructor-student ratio?
 - 1.4.4. Did instructors feel the 12:1 ratio was adequate to address students' learning needs?
 - 1.4.5. Beyond the commonly cited desire to improve reading and writing skills, what reason did the students cite for joining this ABE Level I Program?

Objective 2. Identify partners that will support a sustainable approach to program delivery for ABE Level I and strengthen partnerships within communities

- 2.1. The selection process for participation in the ABE Level I pilot specified that sites must have already established community partnerships. Successful proposals identified community partners who had agreed to commit resources to the sites for the duration of the two-year pilot

(minimal). At present, the level and duration of partner-commitment varies. For this program to be sustained past the pilot period, partnerships are essential.

- 2.1.1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of community partnerships including financial (real and in-kind) and human resources, as it relates to the students.
- 2.1.2. Is there any correlation between student progress and the degree of community partnerships?

Objective 3. Increase program accessibility for adult students by opening ABE Level I sites throughout the province

- 3.1. With the increased instructor-student ratio, and the addition of 4 new sites to complement the existing 5 sites, more Level I students across the province have access to this service. Program standards dictated that students attend classes as scheduled. Although program standards were set equally for all sites, flexibility had to also be considered regarding student needs and accessibility.
 - 3.1.1. Is the pilot sufficiently flexible to ensure accessibility to meet diverse student needs? Does this flexibility impact on client outcomes?
 - 3.1.2. Have students experienced academic success in the program? Identify enabling factors.
 - 3.1.3. Are attendance levels sufficient to make it likely that participants will successfully complete ABE Level I in a reasonable time?
 - 3.1.4. Is there a correlation between attendance and program completion?
 - 3.1.5. What percentage of students participating in the pilot completed ABE Level I? Do these students share any common characteristics? What percentage of these students have entered ABE Level II? Did the students feel prepared for success in Level II?

Objective 4. Collect information on student needs throughout the province and identify barriers faced by students in meeting these needs. Solutions to overcoming these barriers are also to be explored.

- 4.1 While there is a reported need for ABE Level I instruction for adults, historically, the number of adults needing the service is greater than the number of adults who actually enrol, and succeed, in ABE programs. Issues related to accessibility and barriers (real or perceived) have been cited by

adult students and could include issues related to child care, transportation, attendance, confidentiality, ill-health, employment and finances.

- 4.1.1. Do the students perceive any barriers to participation? What barriers do they cite?
- 4.1.2. What is the demographic profile of students in this ABE Level I program?
- 4.1.3. Is there any correlation between demographics and barriers?
- 4.1.4. Are client assessments upon entry to ABE Level I sufficient to identify additional life skills/ personal/ social/ financial supports required? Potential academic difficulties? Learning disabilities?
- 4.1.5. Does this ABE Level I program present any barriers to students' success? How can they be addressed? What are the cost implications, if any?

Other Related Issues

Several other related issues were identified in the proposal. These had to do with situating this study in the broader context of the province's Strategic Social and Strategic Literacy Plans, review of other recent studies, origins of the pilot project and issues of identifying barriers and assessing outcomes for a project of this nature.

Formative Versus Summative Evaluation

Program evaluations are typically classified as either *formative* or *summative*, depending on whether the main goal is to assist in program development and refinement or to render an ultimate judgement on its effectiveness. This evaluation is interpreted as primarily formative in nature because the two year trial is not yet complete and because it is likely too early to determine any long term impacts. However, decisions on whether to continue or to expand the project must be made in the more immediate future. This requires that there be a summative component to the evaluation.

II METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Framework

This evaluation framework has been adapted from a literacy program evaluation framework developed by Literacy British Columbia.² The adaptation was done as part of an earlier evaluation of Early Childhood Literacy and Family Literacy in the Province (AERC, 2003). Minor additional changes have been made for use here. This framework was originally intended primarily for internal use by individual programs at the local level. However, most of the elements of the framework are generic and can be applied to evaluation of any type of intervention of this nature and particularly to external program evaluations. This framework has been used to guide development of the questionnaires and interview protocols used in the study.

The elements of this framework match many of the research questions for this study. Use of the framework helps us develop the specific questions to be asked in interviews and surveys as well as identifying some points requiring evaluator observation and judgement during site visits. Keeping in mind that this is a pilot project, it is not expected that all of the elements will be applicable. Also, some of the elements may apply to provincial program design rather than to individual sites. Finally, it is important to note that the framework has identified a number of questions, especially about goals, planning, student recruitment and assessment that were not explicitly included in the original research questions.

1. Goals and Objectives

Goals are broad statements of what the project or organization wishes to accomplish. These are often expressed in the form of concise “mission statements.” Objectives are more detailed statements of goals, usually expressed in more operational terms.

²British Columbia Framework of Statements and Standards of Best Practices in Family Literacy <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/framwork/cover.htm>. The consultants are grateful to Jean Rasmussen of Literacy B.C. for kind permission to use this material.

A program should have a clear statement of goals and objectives, developed through an appropriate consultation process, and available to staff and clients. These goals and objectives should be realistic, specific to the type of program being implemented and attainable within the time and resources available to the program.

2. Planning

A program should have a process in place for medium to long-term planning. This process should allow for participation by all major stakeholders, should be based on the best available knowledge of “what works” in the field and should recognize the limitations of this knowledge.

3. Access and Recruitment

A program should have a policy on access and recruitment, which clearly identifies the target population, justifies any restrictions and contains transparent processes to be used if all members of the population cannot be accommodated.

A program should have a publicity plan, an accessible location and a schedule that accommodates its target clientele.

4. Facilities and Equipment

A program should be located in facilities that meet all health and safety standards and provide sufficient space to accommodate the number of participants expected and the required program elements.

5. Program Content

The content of the program should be appropriate to the goals and to the developmental level of the intended clientele. Program content should be sufficiently documented to permit participants and others to understand its goals, activities and expected outcomes. Externally developed programs should be implemented as intended or reasons for modifications properly documented. Internally developed programs should include sufficient documentation that others could use the program.

6. Instructional Strategies and Materials

Instructional strategies and materials used should be consistent with the goals of the program and the developmental level of the participants.

7. Governance and Management

A program should have clear governance structures and be managed by professional staff with appropriate training and experience and with management skills sufficient to ensure that the program is implemented as intended, that participants are in a secure environment, and that facilities, equipment and funds are properly handled.

8. Record-Keeping

Appropriate records should be kept and summary statistics, compiled on total number of participants, proportion of the target population, attendance rates, progress towards goals, staff utilization and disposition of funds. In particular, financial records should be adequate to permit external auditing.

9. Staffing

The program should be staffed by personnel with backgrounds and experience appropriate to the program being offered. Appropriate levels of staff training should be provided and efforts made to ensure that staff are familiar with principles of teaching adults and can work as a team towards fulfilling program goals. Where volunteers are used, systematic procedures should be in place for recruitment and training of volunteers.

10. Assessment

Assessment procedures should be in place to ensure needs identification, appropriate selection of participants, progress of individual participants towards objectives, and ultimate attainment of goals. Periodic evaluations of the program as a whole should be undertaken.

11. Attention to Diversity

The program should have appropriate provisions to accommodate the range of social, ethnic, language and other forms of diversity likely to be found in its target population.

Document and Literature Review

The Terms of Reference and the proposal identified document and literature review as one main component of the methodology, and specifically referred to documents related to the pilot. However, we did examine a broader range of documentation by way of familiarization with the pilot and its background, in preparation for instrument development and a search of examples of similar programs and best practices. Among the main sources were:

- previous ABE studies in the province
- relevant material located in the Literacy section at the Department of Education Web-site, including the request for proposals and submission guidelines
- the Strategic Social Plan and the Strategic Literacy Plan
- A “best practices” document provided to sites by the Department of Education
- reports from the ABE pilot sites submitted to the Department over the past year
- instruments and results from a preliminary evaluation conducted by the ABE Consultant earlier this year
- the ABE Level I Program Guide
- Selected documents from the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD)

Analysis of Administrative Data

During the first year of the pilot, sites were expected to submit detailed reports of their activities at six week intervals. Several hundred pages of these reports were submitted. These are in the form of anecdotal records on elements of the Program Guide, instructional resources, assessment instruments and reports on individual students. A student number was used in these reports. However, we were able to match this number to student names to allow the data from different sources to be merged. Although we recognized that this might create confidentiality concerns, access to names was essential to complete the student survey in any event.

These reports were summarized by the Department of Education and any quantitative data they contained was further summarized and entered into a student level data base. This data base also contained survey information, start and end dates and attendance information.

Financial records were available in the form of quarterly cash flow and expenditure reports submitted to the Department. However, financial or in-kind support at the local level was not recorded on these forms. We therefore asked about fund-raising, support from sponsoring agencies and partners and related financial matters at the site level.

Finally, some very useful information was available from a preliminary evaluation conducted by the Adult Literacy Consultant in May and June, 2004. In particular, questionnaires were administered to students, staff and sponsoring agencies. Much of this was repeated in our own survey to ensure that we had the most up to date information possible.

Key Informant and Staff Interviews

Key informants are individuals who possess special knowledge or who have a direct stake in the program under review. Key informants are typically identified as those with some policy or decision-making role, who are in a position to influence the direction of the program of interest and who would likely be the direct users of evaluation reports and policy analyses.

It is common for a distinction to be made between key informants and operational staff. In this case, the most useful distinction is that between site-based individuals and provincial level personnel. Separate interview protocols were developed for these two groups, based on the evaluation framework and questions.

A total of 18 interviews were conducted with site-based personnel, 5 with government and other officials, and 10 with staff of the Department of Human Resources Labour and Employment responsible for clients taking part in the program.

Site Visits

One visit was made to each of the nine sites between November 8 and November

26, 2004, While the main purpose of this visit was to conduct interviews, the site visits were also used to gather information on physical facilities, learning resources and record-keeping practices. Some of the required data on access, attendance, outcomes and the like were gathered during site visits. However, considerable follow-up work was required to obtain all desired documentation in usable form.

Client Survey

A telephone survey was used as the main means of obtaining information on student attitudes and satisfactions and their perceptions of their motivations for taking the program, their longer term educational goals and their perceptions of their success in the program. The survey was also a primary tool for gathering data on barriers to participation, continuation or success.

The client population for this survey was originally defined as 121 individuals who participated in the pilot project during 2003-04. A list of 124 students was actually received from the centres, of which 118 were ultimately identified as 2003-04 students. Unlike most surveys, for which more or less complex sampling designs are required, in this case it was possible to target the full population. This avoids any issues of sampling and sampling error. However, the problem of response rate is exacerbated when target respondents are no longer in the program.

Contact information, including telephone numbers, were obtained from the sites. Site records were reasonably good in this respect, with the exception that some telephone numbers were not up to date and a few cases in which respondents when contacted, indicated that they had not attended or were attending this year but not in 2003-04. In the end, we were able to contact a total of 88 of a potential 118 respondents. We were also able to obtain some data, such as attendance and completion status, on all students from instructor records.

In addition to the survey, informal group discussions were held with students who were on-site at the time of the site visit. These discussions focussed on issues such as motivation to attend, barriers to participation and impressions of the program to date. However, no detailed demographic or progress information was collected from these students.

Drafting of the survey instrument was facilitated by the evaluation framework and by the survey questionnaire used in the earlier evaluation. The instrument was explicitly mapped to the research questions to ensure that all important areas were covered. The original questionnaire was substantially expanded and reformatted

for use in telephone interview format.

III THE PILOT PROGRAM AND ITS CONTEXT

This chapter describes the policy context in which the pilot program is functioning and the events leading up to the decision on a pilot and the selection of sites. A brief overview of the program itself is also given. Finally a summary of some information available on best practices is given as this reinforces some of the directions taken in the pilot and in the evaluation. The information in this chapter comes from document and literature review and from the key informant interviews.

The Policy Context

In the broadest sense, this Pilot Program is situated within the context of the province's Strategic Social Plan (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1998). In particular, this plan takes a community-based approach to social development and calls for building on community strengths, integrating social and economic development and investing in people.

More directly, the pilot project should be viewed as one step in the implementation of the Strategic Literacy Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador. "Words to Live By" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2000) describes the problem of low literacy and some of its consequences and states the following goals:

- ▶ literacy levels among the highest in Canada
- ▶ a culture which values literacy as a desirable goal for all people
- ▶ an integrated approach to literacy development

The Strategic Literacy Plan specifically notes that this province has made major strides in reducing the proportion of the population in the 15-24 year age range with less than Grade 9 education to a level better than the Canadian average. Nevertheless, the report goes on to say that a significant problem remains in the older adult population. Despite high participation in ABE programs on the part of those displaced by the fishing moratorium, the educational needs of this group have not yet been met.

It is important to note that grade level completed is only a rough proxy for literacy. Studies such as the International Adult Literacy Study (Statistics Canada, 2000), which take a functional rather than a grade level approach to literacy, have indicated that this province has some distance to go before achieving its goal of having literacy levels among the highest in Canada. The ABE Level I pilot is specifically aimed at those with assessed skill levels below Grade 7, independently of grade level completed. Indeed, if grade level had been the indicator for admission, most of those participating in the current pilot would not have been eligible.

A 2001 evaluation of Basic Literacy/ABE Level I programs in Newfoundland and Labrador (Goss Gilroy Inc., 2001) identified a number of gaps in ABE Level I programming, including lack of leadership at the provincial level, lack of sustained funding, the need to improve linkages among provincial departments and the need to improve curriculum, professional development and accountability for results. A new model was proposed incorporating the elements of central leadership, community leadership, local program delivery, and government funding used to leverage additional local funding or in-kind contributions.

This pilot program should also be situated in the context of the shift in policies of the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment in the direction of encouraging provincial income support clients to develop plans to move from reliance on income support to employment. Recognizing that low levels of education is a major barrier to career development, the Department provides a variety of supports to clients to encourage participation in education programs. In the case of ABE programs, these supports include a start-up allowance, a small monthly addition to regular income support and funding for transportation and child care. The Department's Client Service Officers use what is known as Enhanced Screening and Assessment to identify clients who might benefit from ABE and other programs and provide support for these clients as they pursue their programs.

The Current Pilot Program

Following the Goss Gilroy report, a provincial consultation was held, which resulted in the establishment of a working group with a mandate to revise the ABE Level I program and to further develop a working model for program delivery. This resulted in a revised Program Guide (Department of Education, 2003) and the design of a pilot project involving full-time studies, an increased student/teacher ratio, professional development for instructors, funding and a number of other

elements intended to yield a more intensive approach to programming at this level. Funding from the National Literacy Secretariat and the province was secured to implement this pilot. The main goal of the pilot was to test the many changes to the program before considering these for adoption.

The specific sites were selected through a Request for Proposals, supported by a fairly detailed set of Terms of Reference outlining Departmental and Agency responsibilities. This request elicited 16 applications, representing a variety of community-based agencies. Originally it had been intended to support six sites. However, this was increased to nine when it became apparent that demand exceeded expectations. A sub-committee of the Working Group, with NLS participation, acted as a selection committee. Sites were selected on the basis of a rating scale and in consideration of the distribution of sites throughout the province, the existence of other programs in an area and the desire to support some existing and some new sites. While funding limitations precluded support for more than nine sites, it seems that not all proposals were of a calibre that would have warranted support in any case. Thus, there was not a large imbalance between the number of fundable proposals and the number of sites eventually selected.

Each site received funding to the level of \$42,000 in the first year and \$41,000 in the second. Most of the funding (\$32,000) was allocated to the salary of an instructor. Rent and instructional materials were also supported within the limits of the budget. A standard contract was put in place for all sites, incorporating the conditions established in the Terms of Reference and the proposal submitted by the sponsoring agency. Agencies were expected to be incorporated as non-profit corporations. In general, it was expected that one appropriately qualified instructor be hired for each centre and that someone from the sponsoring agency have administrative responsibility for the ABE Level I program. Agencies were expected to meet the standards established by the Department of Education for certification of private training institutions to deliver the adult basic education program, with the primary concern being with space requirements and fire/health inspections.

The pilot commenced in August, 2003 with a four-day professional development session. This session addressed principles of adult education, the program guide, instructional strategies, issues of learning disabilities, and expectations for the pilot including reporting requirements. Instructors were provided with documents

including the program guide, a statement of best practices, reporting forms and a basic selection of instructional materials. A second professional development session was held in August, 2004.

It is interesting to note that some of the sites were already established, with experienced instructors and administrators and with instructional materials accumulated over the years. Others effectively had to start from scratch to find space, purchase materials and prepare for instruction. One of the areas of interest of the Department of Education was to examine the reaction to the program of established sites relative to new sites. While we were not able to directly compare the two kinds of sites on a variety of criteria, it is clear that the new sites had a more difficult time becoming established than did existing sites.

Table 1 gives some basic information on the sites and their backgrounds. As can be seen, all are community-based and most have had some history of offering programs of this nature.

Table 1
Site Locations and Sponsor Background

Location	Sponsor	Background
Port Hope Simpson	Port Hope Simpson Learning Centre	Has been offering ABE and literacy programs since 1991. Centre has offered life skills training, basic literacy and GED preparation as well as ABE Level I.
St. John's	St. John's Learning Centre	Has been operating the <i>Skills For Success</i> program for the last two decades in downtown St. John's to clients who come from "high risk" literacy situations. In addition to ABE, this program's goal was to provide training, instill confidence, and provide knowledge that would have sustainable and lasting results for personal success, fulfilment and employability.
Gander	Women Interested in Successful Employment (WISE)	The primary goal of WISE is to assist women in making a successful transition to work. Its core activity is a twelve week experience which incorporates Personal Development, Communication Skills, Career Planning, Job Search and Computer Awareness. ABE is an additional activity in Gander.

Location	Sponsor	Background
Fogo	Fogo Island Community Education Committee	This is a community based organization with an objective to facilitate the development of educational opportunities in this area and is located in the Fogo Island Central academy School Complex. This Complex also houses the <i>Fun and Learning Centre</i> , and the <i>Fogo Island Public Library</i> ,
Marystown	Burin Peninsula Laubach Learning Centre	The Laubach Learning Centre has offered basic literacy to adults on the Burin Peninsula for the past twelve years. Partners have been developed with local agencies who serve adults and a strong base of community awareness has been developed.
Bay St. George	Community Education Network for Southwestern Newfoundland	The Network has a long history for partnering for social development in Southwestern Newfoundland. Since 1991, the Network has been involved in the development of a comprehensive plan for the area and has been involved in the delivery of numerous programs towards that goal.
Trepassey	Southern Avalon Development Association	The Southern Avalon Development Association is a community based, non profit organization committed to social and economic development and to enhancing the quality of life for its citizens.
Plum Point	St. Barbe Development Association	The St. Barbe Development Association has a mandate to promote community, social and economic development and to enhance employment opportunities and economic benefits for the region.
Corner Brook	The Learning Centre	The Learning Centre has been in operation since 1998 and has offered ABE Level I Literacy program for the past four years. Its mandate is to meet the needs of the students by improving their competency in reading and writing, as well as their competency in oral language, math, science, health, social studies, geography and life skills.

Best Practices

A comprehensive review of ABE literature was conducted by the consultants as part of an evaluation carried out in 2001 for the Department of Human Resources and Employment (now HRLE). This included a review of best practices in the field. The following comments, drawn from that review, helps shed some light on indicators of best practice. These are quite consistent with the evaluation framework and are somewhat more specific on outcome indicators.

The literature indicates that ABE clients are often functioning under difficult personal and financial circumstances which work against them in their attempts to achieve their educational goals. Intensive support is obviously required to keep clients in programs. While it may be impossible for program personnel or resources to fully compensate for personal constraints, it is clear that many clients need a range of personal, academic and financial support services to remain in the program.

The literature also tells us that many ABE programs lead a precarious existence, dependent on short-term project funding. One of the main consequences of this is instability in staff. There is something of a vicious circle in a situation where a high level of staff competence and dedication is required to deal with student problems encountered in ABE programs, but where employment practices militate against the development of such capabilities. The inference here is that best practice should start with an attempt to bring some degree of stability to programs.

More generally, the various program descriptions and assessments reviewed suggest that high quality ABE programs would be expected to be characterized by the following elements:

1. Stability in recruitment, programming, financial support, and staffing
2. Competent and dedicated staff
3. Appropriate matching of programs to student needs
4. Ability to address the personal and financial obstacles faced by many of the individuals served
5. Professional development programs for staff
6. Institutional support
7. Community support and involvement
8. Stakeholder support for programs involving partnerships
9. Achievement and attainment targets and plans for meeting these targets
10. Programs for recruitment and especially for retention of students.

A specific set of performance indicators has been developed by the Iowa State Department of Education. These are summarized in Table 2.

Focus Area	Indicator	Measure	Performance Standard
1. Educational Gains	Learners demonstrate progress towards attainment of basic skills Advance in the program or complete requirements that allow them to continue education or training Literacy rates of population regularly assessed	Standardized test scores Rate of student advancement Establish benchmarks for adult population literacy levels	Average of .5 to 1.0 grade level increase with 20-60 instructional hours Average of 10-20 percent of candidates receive GED or high school diploma Conduct state literacy assessment each time NALS is conducted
2. Program planning	Ongoing planning process guided by evaluation, considering demographics, needs, resources, economic and technological trends	Openness of the program to community input	Availability of mechanisms (such as advisory committees) that reflect community input
3. Curriculum and instruction	Curriculum and instruction geared to individual students and levels of student needs	Existence of student goal-setting process linked to decisions on instructional materials, approaches and strategies	Evidence through student-teacher conferences, anecdotal information, student information forms, teacher logs
4. Staff development	Ongoing staff development process that considers needs of staff and offers training necessary to provide quality instruction	Existence of a process of identifying staff development needs	Administration of needs assessment by local coordinators
5. Support services	Program identifies need for student support and makes services available directly or through referral	Presence of a process for identifying student support service needs	Identification of community resources for student support
6. Recruitment	Successfully recruits from target population	Percentage of target population enrolled compared with state demographics	Designated district target relative to state target range of 5-14 percent
7. Retention	Students remain in the program until they meet their stated and appropriate educational goals	Percentage of students meeting personal objectives	Percentage of students meeting personal objectives relative to state average range of 8-15 percent

IV SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW RESPONSES

A total of 18 site-based individuals, including all instructors and administrators, were interviewed. Ten HRLE field officers responsible for clients at all sites were also interviewed. The key informant group included five officials of the Department of Education, the Department of Human Resources and Employment and the College of the North Atlantic. A semi-structured interview protocol was used, with questions based on categories of the evaluation framework and on the evaluation questions. The most complete version of the protocol was used for site-based staff. Modified versions of the protocol were used for other respondents, depending on their position and attachment to the program. In particular, the protocol used with senior officials touched on some broader policy issues than other versions.

Interview responses are summarized here under headings corresponding to those of the evaluation framework. Most of the information comes from the site-based interviews, with key informant and other responses introduced as necessary. Also, where appropriate, information from documents is included to amplify specific points.

Goals, Objectives and Planning

Needs Assessment and Program Goals

Three of the nine sites reported that a recent needs assessment had been completed prior to applying for funding and had been used in making the case for support. Others reported more informal processes involving consultation within the community and judgements based on previous clientele. Some respondents indicated that they relied on broad statistics on education and literacy levels such as those from the community accounts and Statistics Canada reports. Key informants were of the view that needs assessments tend to be “soft,” mainly based on broad data on the number of people with low education levels rather than on an attempt to identify the number who might enrol in a program in a particular community. This has important implications for the distinction between “need” and “demand,” that will be made later in this report.

It is clear from the documentation and the key informant interviews that the program itself has a clear set of goals and objectives. However, only a couple of sites indicated that they had a site-specific mission or goal statement. Indeed, the later was not expected as part of the application for support. Several indicated that the goal was to implement the program as outlined by the Department of Education, and this seems consistent with the Department's own expectations. None of the sites had specific goals, such as completion targets, for this program although some referred to the Terms of Reference for the pilot and others to expectations of the broader sponsoring organization. For example, one organization indicated that it has a target of 80%-90% success in its other programs. Several respondents spoke of the goals as those of the students themselves, with the role of the instructor being to meet these goals.

Not all respondents were optimistic on the question of whether the goals of the program are attainable. Concerns ranged from the resemblance of the program to a school program that has already failed the students to the range of abilities of students and a mismatch of the program to what students need. On the other hand, some respondents had no concerns in this area and felt that most students could succeed in this type of program.

Long Term Plans

Very few of the sites have engaged in long term planning or have any plans to ensure their long-term viability. Most seem to be functioning year to year based on availability of funds. Several spoke of this in terms of student demand, with the specific view depending on whether there is sufficient or excess demand or whether they have had difficulty recruiting students. One organization indicated that it would prefer that someone else take on the responsibility once the pilot has ended, as it does not see itself primarily as a literacy organization.

It is clear from key informants that the intent is to work towards a program that is sustainable in the long term. However, it seems to be unclear in anyone's mind how the pilot would be expanded or how such an expansion would be funded.

Site Policies

The Department of Education itself deliberately did not develop policies on the operation of specific sites. Respondents were asked whether they had developed policies on a range of issues related to safety, supervision, attendance, smoking and the like. Most indicated that these had developed informally, with students

being informed as the need arises. Some respondents said that they would have preferred that these be established by the Department of Education to ensure consistency. Some indicated that they dealt with such matters through a contract signed by all students on entry.

The area in which the clearest and most consistent policy seems to exist is that of attendance. Almost all respondents indicated that they expect regular attendance, that the students know this and that attendance is recorded. Some had explicit rules involving warnings and requirements to withdraw if a student does not meet attendance expectations.

Recruitment, Access and Completion

Demand and Student Recruitment

Responses to questions in this area varied considerably depending on whether or not a centre had a full complement of 12 students. Those that are full indicated that there is little need for recruiting, as there are more than enough inquiries to fill the quota. In some cases, wait lists are being maintained.

In 2003-04 most centres were able to maintain the complement of 12 or close to this. However, this seems to have been a struggle for some sites. At the time of the visits in November, 2004 only four of the nine centres had 12 students and most others were considerably below this level (specific enrolment data will be presented later in the report). Because of continuous intake and exit, it is not possible to project from this the picture for the full 2004-05 year. Nevertheless, it is clear is that, despite the potential added visibility and recruitment ability in the second year, most centres were not able to achieve full enrolment at the beginning of the year and several are operating well below capacity.

Respondents at the low enrolment centres indicated that they had engaged in a variety of recruiting efforts, mainly advertisements in local media, posters throughout the community, direct mailings and even placing brochures in grocery bags. One respondent reported that he had sent a questionnaire to every household in the community, but received only one response.

In addition to local efforts, the Department of Education, in Summer, 2004, made some effort to strengthen linkages with HRLE with a view to improving referral rates. Regional HRLE contact information was also circulated to sites. A Web site specific to the pilot program was also established. While the effect of these efforts

is not known, the recruitment problem at some sites remains significant.

There is an obvious dichotomy in demand between the smaller and the larger communities. It seems clear that there is excess demand in St. John's, Corner Brook, Gander and Stephenville. All others have had difficulty in recruiting a full quota of students. This is particularly troublesome in the second year of operation, when it might be expected that the centre would be better known. The evidence suggests that the recruitment problem is not a function of lack of effort. Alternative possibilities are that the program is not attractive enough for some reason or that the available demand in some communities can be met quickly. Data relevant to these points will be presented later in the report.

Hours of Operation

Almost all centres operate on a regular daytime schedule, typically 9:00 to 3:00 for students and 9:00 to 5:00 for the instructor. One centre indicated that its hours are 8:00 to 4:00 for students. Another moved to late afternoon hours 3:00 to 8:00 this year after finding it difficult to recruit students who could attend during regular daytime hours.

Most staff reported that they consider these hours to be appropriate. Reference was made to these hours coinciding with school hours for children and to the fact that most students are not working and are thus available during the day. One instructor felt that more students could be attracted if the centre was open in the evenings in addition to the daytime hours.

Key informants were of the view that hours of operation is a problematic issue and that this is a test of whether regular hours are appropriate. However, the view was expressed that full time attendance is required to ensure progress.

Attendance

All respondents indicated that regular attendance is expected and all but one keep detailed attendance records. (Data on attendance rates are presented later.) Some did indicate that maintaining attendance is a problem for some students. A couple of sites have highly stringent policies which include warnings and termination for poor attendance. Other seem to handle this more informally. HRLE respondents indicated that their clients are expected to attend regularly as a condition of support.

Barriers to Participation

Financial circumstances were cited most often as the greatest barrier to participation. Lack of transportation and child care were considered the main financial concerns. Interestingly, the availability of allowances to cover these costs for income support clients was not addressed by staff, although some did mention difficulties experienced by some in obtaining these allowances. In retrospect, this should have been raised more explicitly as a question.

A number of staff mentioned the factors of fear and embarrassment at not being able to read and write. Related to this are family circumstances which some staff saw as not encouraging people to attend school. A few people mentioned poor school experiences as a deterrent.

The question of access for persons with disabilities was raised. Most indicated that their facilities are accessible to those with disabilities. However, our impression is that few if any students had physical disabilities to the extent that access would be an issue. A number of staff mentioned that some students have some form of medical or learning disability. However, since we had no access to non-participants, there is no way to judge if individuals are being deterred from even applying for reasons of disability.

The issue of learning disabilities was raised in a number of cases. Instructors indicated that the program is not designed for those with severe learning disabilities. Others, however, noted that many students are those who had learning difficulties while in school. Indeed, given that many students had completed grades up to and including senior high school, it is clear that the program must be attracting many in that category. It is clear that this program is not set up to allow diagnosis and treatment of specific learning disabilities. However, instructors indicated that they address this by attempting to individualize instruction as much as possible.

In this connection, it is important to make a distinction between “learning difficulties,” which are obviously being experienced by most students in an ABE Level I program and “learning disabilities,” which refer to specific diagnosed conditions that inhibit learning. Although the two terms tended to be used interchangeably in the interviews, it is clear that no attempts are made in the program to diagnose or treat specific learning disabilities. It is also clear that the ABE instructors do not have access to earlier diagnoses that may have been made while their students were in school and certainly not to the specialist services required to treat such disabilities. While we did not pursue this issue in

detail, the absence of specific diagnosis and treatment regimes may be a major limitation, considering the nature of the potential clientele for ABE Level I programming.

Program Completion

Key informants and others suggested that reasonably rapid progress through the program is expected. A specific suggestion of 30-40% moving on to Level II ABE was stated by one key informant.

Most respondents indicated that they are reasonably satisfied with the completion rate being achieved. (Again, specific data on this will be given later.) There is some ambiguity over what constitutes completion because there is no formal recognition for completion. Some consider completion to mean having met the objectives set out in the program guide. Others spoke of completion more in terms of moving on to ABE Level 2. Still others seem to see completion as students having met their own goals, whatever these may be. One instructor made an interesting distinction between completion and graduation, with graduation being defined as going on to Level 2.

Instructors had mixed opinions on whether one year is sufficient for students to meet the objectives. Three gave a relatively unqualified “yes” to the question and two were of the view that most students would require more than one year. The others took the view that this depends on the ability of the student.

Staff gave a number of reasons for non-completion. These include lack of capability, family circumstances, financial barriers, transportation, leaving the community and work commitments. On the latter point, there was some reference to the fact that some individuals work on a sporadic basis and drop the program if work is available. There was no clear pattern to the reasons given, and it is not possible to infer from these responses if any areas need to become the focus of efforts to improve the completion rate.

Facilities and Equipment

Ownership and Rent

Six of the sites operate from facilities owned by public or community organizations, with three of these being school boards, two development associations and one

municipality. The remaining three facilities are owned by private interests. In almost all cases, heat, light and maintenance are the responsibility of the building owners. However, one instructor indicated that she has to vacuum and dust the area.

Rental charges vary considerably from nothing in the case of one school board facility to \$690 per month for one private facility. There is little indication of a pattern in cost between public and private facilities. Indeed both some of the lowest and some of the highest rents are found in public facilities.

Adequacy

All facilities were reported as meeting the minimum requirements given by the Department of Education for certifying ABE sites. Almost all respondents indicated that they are satisfied that the space is properly heated and ventilated, that washroom facilities are adequate and that there are no safety hazards. About half the sites have some form of kitchen facilities separate from the main room. In one case, a concern was expressed about an antiquated heating system that broke down and in the same case, there was a concern over noise and odours resulting from renovations to the building.

Several respondents were concerned about the small size of the available space. In a few cases, this problem was alleviated by having a small number of students, but the view was that the space would be crowded for the full quota of 12. Several instructors noted that there is no separate instructor office space. In a couple of cases, the centre is able to take advantage of additional unused space in the building.

Our own observation is that some of the spaces would be too crowded with 12 students. In one instance where we did see 12, all were crowded around a small table. A later observation found the students in a more spacious room but we were told that this is not part of the rented space but is available courtesy of the landlord.

Most instructors were satisfied with the furnishings available, though a few indicated that this is barely adequate. We did notice that most sites have several computers.

Our own impressions of the facilities are mainly in accord with those of the instructors. Some of the space is marginal, even if it does meet minimal standards. Some sites are in basement areas or in areas with no windows. Our

sense is that the furnishings are mostly a patchwork of whatever is available or could be borrowed and that few of the centres are very attractively furnished. The space and furniture compares poorly to what would be found in most school and college facilities.

The Program

The Provincial Program Guide

Only a small number of provincial officials knew the program guide intimately. The view was expressed that the present guide is a draft with some gaps and that a revision is needed. In particular, it was felt that greater reference is needed to resources.

Instructors gave the provincial program guide mixed reviews. While most said that the guide is consistent with the goals of their program, only two gave it an unqualified endorsement, saying that students completing this program should be well prepared to enter Level 2. About half thought it appropriate with some qualifications. In most cases, the concern was over the need to be flexible to adjust to the needs of students. In a few cases, the issue raised was lack of resource support for the program. Several indicated that they deviated from the program. One indicated that the objectives given in the guide are insufficient to bring students to the level required to enter Level 2 and particularly to meet the minimum CAAT level set by the College of the North Atlantic. One indicated that it was used only as a guide which, of course, is implied by the name in any case. One instructor was concerned that the program tries to cover too much, especially for students who simply want to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

The division of opinion on the guide seems to be related to whether the instructor sees the main function of the program as preparing students for ABE Level 2 or as more general literacy development. It is clear that students have different views of what they want from the program and it seems that instructors attempt to adjust to these differences. It is useful to note in this connection that the Terms of Reference for the program identify several different kinds of students for which the program should be suited. Students with specific goals other than advancement to Level 2 are included, but with the qualifier that, once enrolled, such students often decide to continue to completion. Special needs students, who are viewed as unlikely to be able to complete the program, are considered as candidates for referral to an alternative agency. From this and other indicators we conclude that the goal of the Department of Education is primarily to have students who can complete the program and move on to higher levels. However, this is not

in full accord with the views of some of the instructors and students.

The main feature of the program guide is a set of fairly specific statements of objectives. This would suggest that a direct measure is needed of this progress. However, it appears as if instructors do not keep formal checklists or other indicators of whether the objectives have been met and this is not explicitly identified as part of the reports to the Department. The Brigance test used as the formal indicator of progress includes measures in less than half of the major areas included in the Program Guide.

Instructional Materials and Strategies

Most of the instructors were of the view that the package of instructional materials made available by the Department is not adequate. However, this did not seem to be a major problem for many who indicated that they had built up a repertoire of materials over the years. Some indicated that a lot of material has to be photocopied for student use. We did not inquire as to whether this included copyrighted materials but this would be a concern. Our brief observations suggest that there is extensive use of worksheets and similar photocopied materials. In retrospect, this issue should have been probed more intensively. There were a couple of comments from instructors to the effect that some instructional materials were designed for children and are not appropriate for adults. However, the Department of Education view is that these were provided with the intention that they be adapted before use with adults and that this point was emphasized in the professional development sessions.

Key informants indicated that sites have access to the literacy collection of the Provincial Literacy Clearinghouse. However, only one instructor explicitly mentioned use of this resource.

All sites had at least one computer and many had several. All had at least one computer with an Internet connection. In a few cases there were more computers than students. We did not pursue at length the quality of the computers or the speed of the Internet connections.

Instructional strategies were also not pursued in any great detail. Indeed, this could not be properly done without extensive observational work. Most instructors described their instructional processes as a combination of group and individual work. Most appear to have a regular schedule with subjects organized in sequence much as in a regular school setting. Some indicated that they work with individuals more in the core areas with group work being done for social studies.

We did not get the impression that this program is as highly individualized as Level 2 and 3 programs taught at the College of the North Atlantic.

Student/Instructor Ratio

Key informants tended to be of the view that the 12:1 ratio is appropriate and cited the recommendation of the Working Group in this respect. Nevertheless, the view was expressed that this would require good management skills on the part of the instructor. It is clear that the increase in ratio was mainly driven by the desire to reduce unit cost and allow more sites to be funded. However, comparability with higher ABE levels and the ability of adults to learn from peers were also cited as justification for the current ratio.

In contrast, almost all instructors were of the view that the 12/1 ratio is too high. Recommendations ranged from 6/1 to 10/1. As might be expected, comments were qualified in terms of the needs of students and the need for individual instruction. A couple of instructors noted that they had not had to face the problem because they did not have 12 students.

Aside from appropriateness of the ratio for instruction, we should reiterate that few sites have enough space to comfortably accommodate 12 students.

Governance and Administration

Governance

The sponsoring agencies for all centres were given earlier (Table 1). All are community-based non-profit agencies. However, beyond this there are some important distinctions. The first is whether the site is governed by its own stand-alone board or committee or is part of some larger organization. Two of the centres fall into the first category. The second is whether the umbrella organization is concerned primarily with education or some other area. Two of the centres are sponsored by local Development Associations whose mandate is primarily economic development. The remainder of the umbrella organizations are mainly focussed on education in one form or other. For example, the WISE organization's primary activities involve assisting women in making a transition to employment. This organization is also the only one which extends beyond the immediate community in which the ABE Level 1 site is located.

A more comprehensive education oriented model is represented by the Community Education Network in Stephenville. Such an organization has the advantage of experience and a broader range of resources. Such a setting may also help reduce the isolation inherent in a stand-alone ABE Level I centre. On the other hand, there may be an argument that mixing adults and marginalized school-aged youth presents some difficulties. The point here is that a more comprehensive organization can bring to bear greater experience and resources. How they organize their specific programs is a different issue.

Several of the sponsors are long-standing community education agencies. The Laubach organization in Marystown and the Community Education Network in Stephenville are examples. Such agencies take on a broad literacy or alternative education mandate and seem to survive from year to year on whatever funding is available, shifting their focus to conform to the funding requirements.

Administrative Structure

Larger umbrella organizations tend to have a more formalized board of directors and administrative staff. In these cases, the instructor clearly reports to an administrative officer. At the opposite extreme, in at least one case the instructor seems also to be the administrator. In principle, the latter arrangement presents some problem because there is no clear supervisory relationship, and signing authority seems to rest with the instructor. On the other hand, these organizations are so small, and their budgets so limited, that it is difficult to argue that there is much of a practical problem.

Partnerships

A few governing organizations appear to consist of partnerships between two or more local agencies although administrative responsibility rests with one of these. The local school board, the College of the North Atlantic and some town councils and development associations were mentioned by respondents as partners.

Key informants indicated that partners are expected to provide some funding support to the ABE Level I centres. However, there was concern that the role of partners is quite variable. One informant expressed doubt that the partnership model can be made to work.

In only a few cases was it possible to identify substantive contributions from partner agencies. Some respondents mentioned low rent, implying that rent is

subsidized. Interestingly, this was as prevalent among the privately owned as the publicly owned sites. That is, respondents felt in some cases that the rent was below market value. However, we have no way to verify this. Some of the rental rates in public facilities were high enough to suggest that the partner agencies are not subsidizing rent to any great degree. In a small number of cases, mention was made of support from the partners for photocopying and from provincial agencies such as the Literacy Development Council and the provincial library system for instructional materials. Mention was made in a couple of cases of the provision of free advertising services by local media organizations. In one case it was noted that the landlord has provided some work for students. Finally, one site has found Federal funding to hire a computer specialist.

Although this was rarely mentioned by respondents, and the status is unclear from the Department of Education documents, the most obvious partnership is that between the Department and the local agencies. In effect the Department provides a framework and resources but relies on local agencies to manage the program. A second similar partnership is between the centres and the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment. Substantial resources are devoted to supplementing the normal income support allowances to allow HRLE clients to attend the program. While instructors and administrators were obviously aware of such support, this was generally not viewed in terms of a partnership arrangement. Indeed, while it might be debatable whether to call these connections partnerships (rather than contractual arrangements) what is clear is that none of the sites could function were it not for the financial support provided by provincial departments. Even the funding available from the National Literacy Secretariat was, to our understanding, provided through a provincial rather than a local initiative.

Staff

Staffing is a relatively straightforward matter when the demand is for only one instructor in each case. Staffing is almost equally divided between established residents of the community with some previous history of work in literacy or ABE programs and individuals hired specifically for this program. The latter appear to have been mainly teachers or substitute teachers in the regular school system, mainly living in the community before the site was established.

Seven of the nine instructors have a B.Ed. degree or equivalent with three having more than one degree. Two instructors did not mention having a degree but both indicated that they have had substantial teaching experience at either the K-12 or college level.

None of the site administrators indicated that there had been any problem finding staff. There seems to have been no staff changes over the two years.

Professional Development

All instructors indicated that they had attended the two professional development sessions held by the Department of Education in August, 2003 and 2004. Instructors were generally positive about the professional development sessions provided by the Department of Education, especially in terms of the opportunity afforded to meet their colleagues and to share their own experiences. The opportunity for an update on the program guide was also welcomed. On the other hand, there was concern that insufficient attention was paid to issues of adult learning and especially of learning disabilities. There were a couple of complaints that instructors were required to attend during the Summer when they were not being paid. It is understood from the Department of Education that compensatory time off was available and was taken by instructors. However, this was not referenced by the instructors themselves and it is not clear whether this was considered sufficient compensation for time taken during the Summer.

Several instructors indicated that they had attended a learning disabilities workshop sponsored by the Learning Disabilities Association and other conferences sponsored by literacy groups. Beyond this, experienced ABE and literacy instructors mentioned conferences that they had attended over the years and their involvement in provincial organizations.

Use of Volunteers

Basic literacy programs have historically been run by volunteer organizations and volunteer staff. There seems to have been an expectation that this carry over into this program. About half of the sites indicated that they made some use of volunteers. We did not get a clear sense of the extent of use. The most prevalent activity for volunteers seems to be tutoring, although assistance with photocopying and social events were also mentioned by a few. Some also noted that board members are volunteers. One instructor indicated that it would not be appropriate to use volunteers for teaching as they are not properly trained (although it is not clear if teaching includes tutoring) A couple of others indicated that there is no need for volunteers with only a small number of students. Three centres indicated that there was major difficulty in recruiting volunteers. Others were of the view that this is not a problem.

On a related issue, the question was asked whether students in this program are in a position to help each other. There was almost universal agreement that this is possible and desirable and that a good deal of this takes place.

Finances

It is clear that the sites are almost totally dependent on the funding received from the Department of Education. The one notable exception is that one centre was able to attract federal funding to hire a computer instructor whose work seems to be fully dedicated to the pilot program. We do not know if any of the centres would have been funded from other sources had the pilot funding not been available, although some have had a history of finding funds over the years.

A couple of centres mentioned that small amounts of money have come from fund raising and donations. While several of the centres have existed in some form in past years, there is obvious reliance on grants and contracts from various government programs and the focus of the work can shift from year to year depending on the specific targets of the funding agencies. It is clear that none of these centres would have been doing the ABE Level 1 program without the pilot project funding. While most sites have been able to identify partner agencies, there is little to indicate any significant financial contributions from partners.

For the most part, financial matters are looked after by the program administrator, who may be an employee of the larger organization or a board member. In a couple of cases, the instructor keeps the financial records and appears to have signing authority. Quarterly reports are sent to the Department of Education. Most have no formal provisions for auditing the books. However, given the size of the budget and the limited discretion available (most of the budget goes directly to the instructor's salary), there is little to be audited in any case.

Assessment

Brigance Inventory

All instructors indicated that they are using the Brigance Inventory of Essential Skills both as an initial screening test and as an indicator of student progress. Although a few instructors gave lukewarm endorsements of this test, most had some criticisms. The main concerns included low level of the skills assessed (although one instructor remarked that the mathematics component is too difficult and a couple of others mentioned that the test is intimidating), the lack of match

of the test with program objectives, the use of imperial rather than metric units in the mathematics section and the “memorization” effect of repeated administration of the test as a progress measure.

It is not clear to what extent the Brigance Inventory or other tests being used match the objectives in language and mathematics. However, it is obvious that this test does not measure any of the objectives in science, consumer education, the workplace, government and computers. More than half of the objectives included in the program guide are therefore not assessed in any formal way.

Other Student Assessments

Instructors are generally not using formal assessments other than the Brigance. A couple mentioned that they use the Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT) at the end, or at least attempt to prepare students to write the CAAT because that is the required test for admission to ABE Level 2. The reports submitted to the Department included only one record of CARA scores. Beyond this, most instructors spoke of informal and anecdotal assessments based on the program objectives. There was not much evidence of systematic approaches to recording whether or not these objectives are being met. However, the six-weekly reports to the Department often included qualitative statements of student progress in addition to the test scores.

Recognition of Completion

Since there is no provincial certificate for completion of ABE Level I, we asked if the sites themselves offered any such recognition. Only two instructors indicated that they have made up their own certificates. Others seem to be waiting for the Department of Education to move on this. One instructor mentioned that a letter had been sent from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister certifying completion. However, our understanding is that this was intended simply as a congratulatory letter acknowledging student efforts during the first year and was not intended to be a certificate. ABE Level I is considered to be the first part of a three part program and the program cannot be considered complete until Level III has been completed. A couple of sites did indicate that they have some form of completion ceremony and one mentioned that references are given if needed.

Almost all sites indicated that there is provision for long term care of student records. In most cases, this was seen as the responsibility of the sponsoring organization. The implication is that this depends on continued existence of that

organization. One administrator expressed the view that records should go to the Department of Education when the pilot is completed.

Program Evaluation

The best practices statement given by the Department of Education and the evaluation framework being used here state that centres should evaluate their programs regularly. None of the sites indicated that they had engaged in any form of program evaluation other than what is done on a day to day basis and what is included in the reports to the Department. While it might be argued that the provincial evaluation overrides any need for local evaluations, issues such as recruitment problems, use of volunteers and local administration (including personnel evaluation) would be better handled at the local level.

Attention to Diversity

This area has somewhat narrower meaning in the local context from what it might mean in larger centres that are characterized by wide ethnic, racial and language diversity. In this case, the main issue is whether the program is flexible enough to respond to variations in student age, previous education, family circumstances, or physical disability. It is also important to note that a distinction needs to be made between learning disabilities and learning difficulties. While most students in an ABE Level I program would have experienced learning difficulties, this does not imply that any type of diagnosis of specific learning disabilities had been made or that instructors would know of such disabilities.

Key informants were of the view that accommodations need to be made for those with learning disabilities. On the other hand, there was a clear opinion that this program is not designed for those with learning disabilities that would prevent them from completing the program in a reasonable time (certainly two years or less).

Key informants also expressed concern that most candidates for ABE Level I have not done well in school but that learning disabilities are poorly diagnosed and ABE instructors are not trained to deal with such disabilities. There was also concern that, while literacy can be viewed as a basic human right, this particular program was not intended for individuals who have little prospect of reaching the end of Level I.

On the general question, most respondents were reasonably positive in their views about their ability to respond to student diversity.. All indicated that their facilities are wheelchair accessible, although our own observation is that this is marginal

in some cases. Many instructors seemed to be of the view that almost all students coming to this program have some form of learning difficulties and certainly have not had good school experiences. Most were able to cite instances of students with identifiable physical or mental disabilities who have come to the program. A couple noted that they would have difficulty if they had to accommodate students with severe learning disabilities and felt that the program is not designed for this purpose. On the other hand, nobody indicated that they have had to exclude anyone on these grounds.

Most instructors indicated that their approach to accommodating diversity is individualization of instruction. We were unable to probe in detail the specific kinds of accommodations made or whether any form of special materials or devices are being used. However, our sense is that individualization refers mainly one on one instruction rather than more formal accommodations.

V THE STUDENTS

Information on students was gathered from several sources including the sites themselves, the reports to the Department of Education, the student survey and the informal focus group sessions conducted during the site visits. This chapter draws from all of these sources to present a profile of student backgrounds, performance in the program, attitudes to the program and activities before and after the program.

Participation and Completion

Table 3 gives basic data on enrolments, completions³ and continuations for the students enrolled in 2003-04 and new students in 2004-05. Of the 118 students in the program last year, about 32% had completed the program, 29% were still in the program in November, 2004 and 39% had left the program without completing. Both the completion rate and the return rate vary considerably across centres. However, because of the small numbers involved, it would not be appropriate to make any strong inferences about the productivity of the centres from these data. The main question of interest is “why is it that so many have not completed and so many have returned?” Some answers to this question will emerge from the student survey and other data.

The figures for November 2004 are about the same as those for the same period in 2003-04. Only four centres were at the designated level of 12 students as of November 2004. Because of continuous intake and exit, it is likely that total enrolment will shift as the year progresses, as was the case in 2003-04. However, our sense from the interviews is that those centres that have had difficulty recruiting are unlikely to have a major influx of students later in the year. Most centres do not have a full class of 12 students throughout the year. Also, the occurrence of substantial carry-over from last year, combined with low total enrolments suggests that few new students are available in some locations.

³Completion refers to student self-reports, supplemented by information from instructors for students who were not interviewed. Instructor reports to the Department closely matched these figures.

Table 3
Summary of Enrollment, Completion and Continuation

	Centre	Total students last year	Completed program last year	No longer enrolled: did not complete	Returned this year	No data available	Enrolled this year	Enrolled who attended last year	Number still in program this year	Number on site day of visit
1	Stephenville	18	4	8	6		24	5	12	6
2	Corner Brook	16	2	7	7		13	7	13	8
3	St. John's	12	3	0	9		12	8	12	11
4	Plum Point	10	6	3	1		6	1	6	4
5	Fogo	7	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	0
6	Marystown	21	11	8	1	1	5	1	5	3
7	Gander	17	6	6	5		14	5	12	12
8	Trepassey	11	3	7	0	1	5	0	5	3
9	Port Hope Simpson	6	0	3	3		4	4	4	3
	Total	118	37	45	33	3	84	37	70	40
<p>Note 1: Data for 2003-04 from student survey supplemented by instructor reports. Note 2: Data for 2004-05 from instructor reports. Note 3: 6 students from original 2003-04 lists reported that they had not attended in that year</p>										

A rough indicator of attendance is given by the numbers observed on the day of the site visit, which give an attendance rate of 57%. Of course this figure may not be representative and may even have been biased by the visit itself. More detailed attendance data will be presented in later sections.

Student Profile

Table 4 gives data on the educational backgrounds and Table 5 other demographic information for students in the program in 2003-04. These figures are straightforward. However, there are a number of obvious features which illustrate how this group differs from the general population.

Educationally, the notable point is that almost all students reported that they had completed a level in school higher than that expected at the end of the ABE Level I program. This, of course, illustrates the frequently made point that grade completed is not necessarily an indicator of performance. Grade completed in school is related to age. In particular, none of the students under the age of 30 had completed less than Grade 8. The fact that close to half of the students had attended special education classes in school reinforces the point made by many instructors that many students have learning difficulties. The important question not answered by these data is whether adults exposed to a relatively short program can overcome earlier difficulties to the point of achieving levels of success they were unable to achieve in at least several years of school.

Notable features of the demographic profile include the preponderance of women in the program, the wide age range of students, the very low income levels of both individuals and households and the preponderance of social assistance as a source of income.

Reasons for Taking the Program

Table 6 shows the proportions of students giving various reasons for taking the program. Given the high proportions in each of these categories, it is fairly obvious that most students were able to give more than one reason. When pressed to give their main reason, the dominant areas were general upgrading and improving reading and writing skills. About 12% specifically gave completion of Grade 12, a further 10% gave post-secondary preparation and a slightly smaller proportion gave getting a job as their main reasons. Again, we caution that the numbers in these categories are quite small and that no strong patterns should be inferred.

Table 4
Educational Background of 2003-04 Students

	% of students
Last Grade completed in school	
6 or lower	15
7-9	41
10-12	28
don't know	6
School Program	
Attended regular classes	85
Attended special education classes	46
Other programs since school	
attended	37
completed	18

Table 5
Profile of 2003-04 Students

	% of students
Gender	
Female	67
Age	
< 20	10
20-24	6
25-29	20
30-39	26
40-49	28
50 or more	10
Marital status	
single	60
married	27
divorced/separated	12
Dependent Children	
yes	43

	% of students
Individual Income	
< 10,000	67
10,000-15,000	11
> 15,000	4
don't know	18
Household Income	
< 10,000	43
10,000-15,000	9
> 15,000	10
don't know	37
Sources of Income (2003)	
salary or wages	15
Employment Insurance	18
Social Assistance	63
Other	9
Work History	
Ever worked at job for pay	89
Worked immediately before ABE	43
Owned a business at some time	15

Table 6
Reasons for Taking the Program

Reason	% of students
Improve reading and writing skills	77
General academic upgrading	94
Improve other skills such as math	82
Improve job prospects	85
Help children	56
Enter post-secondary	84
Personal interest	83
Note: these figures do not add to 100% because multiple responses were allowed	

Program Participation and Attendance

There was no particular expectation that students attend for the full year. In principle, the program was expected to operate on a continuous intake and exit basis, in which students would move on when they reached the desired level of performance, and be replaced by others if demand existed. However, there was a clear expectation of regular attendance.

We were able to obtain from eight of the centres data on the start and end dates of all students and from seven on the number of days present and absent for 2003-04. From this we were able to compute program durations and attendance rates for individuals and centres. These figures are given in Tables 7 and 8.

Centres were open in 2003-04 for a total of 180-190 days. From Table 7 we can see that there was a fairly wide range of duration of student participation. Thirty percent of students attended for more than 150 days while at the other extreme 21% attended for under 50 days. Table 7 also gives a breakdown of completion rates by duration of attendance. This clearly indicates that completion is related to the length of time students attended. Very few of those attending less than 50 days completed. However, completion rates increased considerably for those attending more than 50 days. It appears as if the important cutoff point was attendance more than 50 days. This may indicate that many students can complete in a fairly short time. However, these results should be interpreted cautiously because of the small number of students in the breakdown categories.

These percentages were not broken down by centre because the numbers in each category are quite small. However, the mean duration did not differ a great deal among centres (the range across centres was from about 90 to 126 days), indicating that all centres had some coming and going throughout the year.

Table 8 gives attendance rate by centre for those for which data were available. Given that regular attendance was expected and that most centres indicated that they did have attendance rules, some of these figures seem relatively low. In particular, the minimum attendance levels at some centres are a long way from expectation. Unfortunately, we do not have in all cases a detailed breakdown of reasons for non-attendance as recorded by the centres. However, some information is available on this from the student survey.

Table 7
Completion Rate by Days of Student Participation

Days Attended	% attending	% completing	
		Completed	Not Completed
< 50 days	21	19	81
50-99 days	14	63	36
100-149 days	19	55	45
150 or more days ¹	30	75	17
No data	14		

¹ 8 percent of students in this category reported that they did not know if they had completed or not.

Table 8
Attendance Rates by Centre

Centre	Mean % attendance	Range
Stephenville	91	60-100
Corner Brook	72	49-93
St. John's	No data available	
Plum Point	79	46-100
Fogo	78	55-97
Marystown	83	28-100
Gander	85	36-100
Trepassey	Attendance not recorded	
Port Hope Simpson	87	74-98
Overall	83	28-100

Almost all students reported that they had attended almost all sessions, with only about 10% indicating that they had attended three-quarters of the time or less. Breaking down the actual results into the same categories as the student reports suggest that the student reports are slightly inflated but not drastically so. In practice it seems that most students did attend regularly but the low attendance of a few is responsible for reducing the averages. The most common reasons students gave for not attending were illness and financial reasons. However, this question was asked only of those reporting that they attended three-quarters of the time or less, so these numbers are very small.

Student Performance and Progress

The Brigance Inventory of Basic Skills was the core instrument used to measure student initial skills in language and mathematics and to assess their progress through the program. This test gives a number of sub-scale scores for reading, language and mathematics. From the available reports, it appears that only selected sub-scales were used in this program. Brigance results were reported to the Department of Education as part of the regular six-weekly reports required.

Because relatively few students attended for the full year and even fewer completed the program there are very few full records of progress. Only a couple of rough indicators can be given. First, the distribution of scores (grade equivalents) on each available sub-scale was computed for each reporting period. These were further collapsed into three levels, representing performance equivalent to the end of Grade 3, Grade 6 and Grade 7 or above. Second, the gains in grade equivalents between the first and sixth reporting period and the second and fifth reporting period were computed for those students for whom the relevant pairs of scores were available.

Table 9 gives indication that some gains occurred from the early to the later reporting periods. In both reading comprehension and word recognition, the proportions at the lowest level declined and those at the highest levels increased over the year. The changes in mathematics were generally from the lowest to the middle level, with very few being in the highest level at any point. There was very little change in spelling. However a larger proportion was in the higher levels in spelling than in other areas at the beginning so there was, in effect, less room for gain.

Table 9
Summary of Brigance Results, Six-Week Reporting Periods

Measure	Report 1	Report 2	Report 3	Report 4	Report 5	Report 6
Reading Comprehension						
3 or below	31(11)	33(13)	28(6)	10(4)	20(11)	20(11)
4-7	39(14)	21(8)	24(5)	34(14)	26(14)	26(14)
7 or above	30(11)	46(18)	48(10)	56(23)	55(30)	55(30)
Word Recognition			insufficient data			
3 or below	26(10)	42(22)		21(8)	16(9)	16(9)
4-7	49(19)	57(30)		34(13)	36(20)	36(20)
7 or above	26(10)	2(1)		45(17)	47(26)	47(26)
Mathematics						
3 or below	67(40)	16(3)	50(18)	37(19)	29(19)	29(19)
4-7	33(20)	47(9)	50(18)	53(27)	65(42)	65(42)
7 or above		37(7)		10(5)	6(4)	6(7)
Spelling		insufficient data	insufficient data	insufficient data		
3 or below	9(2)				23(11)	23(11)
4-7	64(14)				65(42)	50(24)
7 or above	27(6)				27(13)	27(13)
Notes: Categories are grade equivalents. Results are percentages of students reaching the level. Number in parentheses is the number of students for whom results are available.						

The comparisons in Table 9 have the weakness that not all the students are the same across the comparisons. In fact, fewer than 30 students had measures over the full period. Some of the differences may therefore be a function of using different individuals. For those for which data could be matched across reporting intervals, it was possible to compute a measure of gain at the individual level. This was done for reporting periods 1 and 6 and also 2 and 5. These gains were again summarized in categories and appear in Table 10.

For reading comprehension and word recognition, about 50% of these students advanced by 3 or more grade levels from periods 1 to 6. The gains for mathematics and spelling were somewhat smaller. Overall gains from period 2 to 5 were, not surprisingly, smaller than those for 1 to 6. Indeed, there was very little gain in mathematics over this interval.

Table 10
Gains from First to Sixth and Second to Fifth Reporting Periods

Measure	Gain 1-6 %(n)	Gain 2-5 %(n)
Reading Comprehension		
negative or zero	20(4)	35(9)
1-2 grades	30(6)	27(7)
3 or more grades	50(10)	38(10)
Average gain	2.7	1.4
Word Recognition		
negative or zero	5(1)	19(5)
1-2 grades	43(9)	37(10)
3 or more grades	52(11)	44(12)
Average gain	2.3	2.6
Mathematics		
negative or zero	22(6)	69(11)
1-2 grades	44(12)	19(3)
3 or more grades	33(9)	13(2)
Average gain	1.85	-.6
Spelling		
negative or zero	14(2)	Insufficient data
1-2 grades	79(11)	
3 or more grades	7(1)	
Average gain	1.4	

Average gains in the 1-6 interval ranged from 1.4 grades in spelling to 2.7 grades in reading comprehension. All of these gains are statistically significant. Gains over the 2-5 period ranged from -.60 for mathematics to 2.6 for word recognition. The mathematics change is not statistically significant.

It is important to note that, in the absence of an appropriate control group, it is impossible to clearly attribute the observed gains to the program itself. A host of extraneous factors may have been at work. One obvious example, as pointed out by some instructors, is the effect of repeated taking of the test. Even if different versions are used, practice effects can remain significant, especially for people who have little history of test taking. Although the results are clearly in the desired direction, the available comparisons do not yield a definitive test of program effects.

Table 11
Student Reported Reasons for Non-Completion

Reason	% of students
Family circumstances	43
Financial	41
Transportation	38
Health	29
Lost interest	5
Program related (too difficult, instruction, facilities, location)	20
Other	33

Note.1 These figures do not add to 100% because multiple responses were allowed
Note 2. The category "family circumstances" was not defined more explicitly. This and other categories may overlap.

Completion

Data presented earlier indicate that just over 30% of the participants had completed the program by the end of the 2003-04 year. The most common reasons given for non-completion are shown in Table 11. These figures should be read with caution, again because the question was asked only of those who had not completed but are no longer in the program. However, it is reasonable to conclude from this that the main reasons given were personal and not program-related. All of the program-related reasons combined had a smaller response rate than most of the personal reasons taken alone.

Perceptions of the Program

As shown in Table 12, even though only about 30% had completed, more than two-thirds indicated that they were more successful in the program than they expected, while almost all of the remainder felt that they were about as successful as expected. The table also indicated that all students would recommend the program to others, with half strongly recommending.

Table 12
Perceptions of Success and Recommendation to Others

	% of students
Perception of success	
More successful than expected	68
About the same as expected	26
Not as well as expected	4
Don't know	3
Recommend the program to others	
Strongly recommend	50
Recommend	50
Not recommend	0

The percentages of students indicating that they were very satisfied or satisfied with various aspects of the program are shown in Figure 1. These figures add up to close to 100% in all cases (the numbers were actually in the 98-99% range which is not visible on the graph). While a positive response bias is typical of satisfaction scales, these numbers are among the highest we have seen in several studies we have conducted using similar scales.

Activities Since Leaving the Program

Students no longer in the program were asked to indicate what they have been doing since leaving. These figures are given in Tables 13 with numbers instead of percentages because the totals were different for each question, making percentages less meaningful. These figures indicate that just over half of those completing the program, but only about one-fourth of those who started have gone on to higher ABE levels or to post-secondary (We did not ask about the type of post secondary program involved). It is noted that these figures do not include those on wait lists for higher levels of ABE. This number is not known.

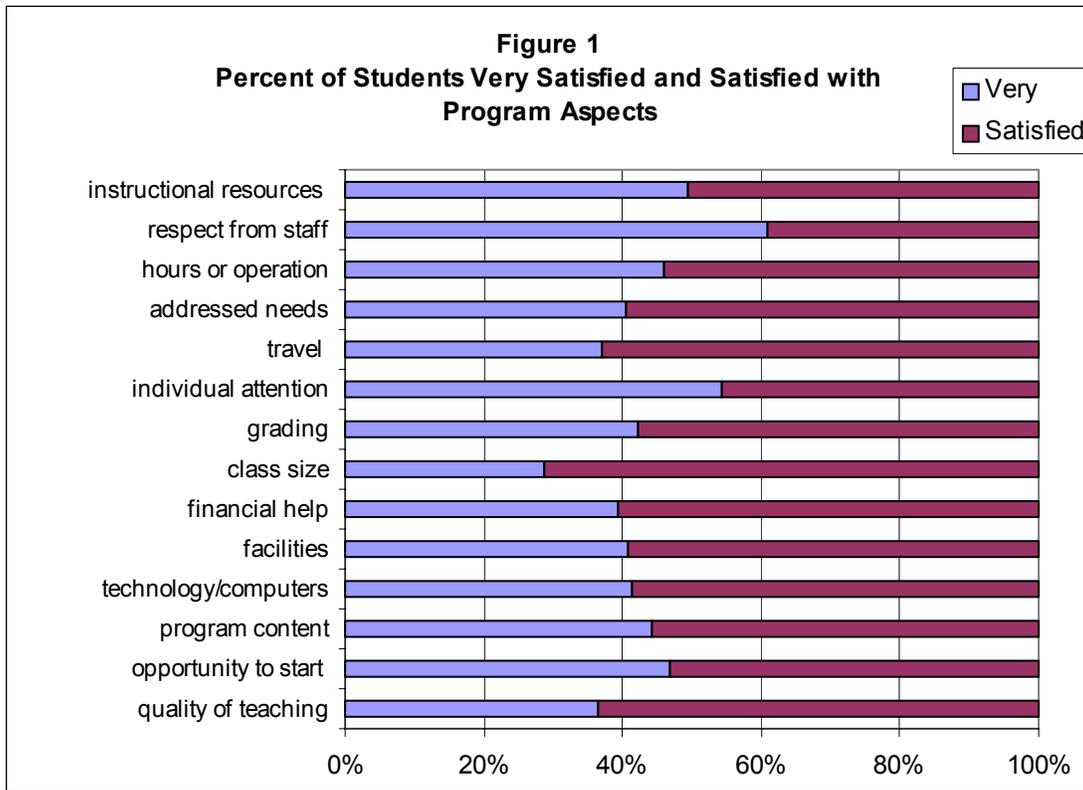


Table 13
Activities Since Leaving the Program

Activity	Number of students
Enrolled in Level II or III ABE	19
Post-secondary	3
Looked for work in the province	27
Worked in the province	12
Left the province to find work	5
Worked outside the province	2
Stayed home with family	25
Other	4

VI ANALYSIS

This chapter examines each of the study objectives and issues and attempts to answer each of the specific research questions to the extent possible.

Objective 1: Effectiveness of the Program Delivery Model.

Issue 1.1

A successful ABE Level I delivery site must help adult students achieve their individual educational goals in a physical site appropriate to adult learning; a learning environment that is safe and respectful of adults learners; and, curriculum that is relevant and practical and includes age-appropriate resources and instruction.

1.1.1. Was the physical environment appropriate for the adult learner?

The provincial ABE certification requirements makes some reference to the type of facilities required. However, other than size and accessibility requirements, the only references to any kind of special facility are to a science laboratory if high school courses are being offered and to a quiet room suitable for consultation with students.

All of the facilities meet the minimum requirements. However, some of the spaces would be crowded if the site had a full quota of 12 students. Not all have separate office space. Some have access to space extra to what is being rented. While there is nothing to suggest major inadequacies, some of the spaces would have to be judged marginal.

1.1.2. Did students feel that they were treated with respect as adult students in this environment?

1.1.3. Did the students feel that all of their learning needs were met?

Students gave an overwhelmingly positive response to the first of these questions. As for the second, the question asked referred to needs for **upgrading** rather than to **all** needs (since the latter could include needs for which the program was not intended to meet). In any event, the result was also overwhelmingly positive.

- 1.1.4. Did the instructors feel that there were appropriate adult materials available to support the ABE Level I program?

Instructors did express some concern about the availability of instructional materials, particularly the limitations of the package provided by the Department. However, the level of concern was clearly related to the experience of the instructors themselves with programs of this nature. The more experienced instructors had obviously built their own repertoire of materials and did not have to rely on those supplied by the Department or purchased with the pilot budget.

- 1.1.5. Were instructors able to easily access additional resources as necessary?

The ability of sites to build their repertoire of instructional materials seems strongly related to the rent being paid. Sites with relatively high rents (more than \$300-400 per month) have little money left with which to purchase materials. In some cases, this was coupled with high needs in establishing a new program. While there were no major complaints, we did get the impression that the repertoire of instructional materials is rather limited at some sites. Only a few mentioned drawing on external sources such as the public libraries and none mentioned schools or other sources. Our general sense is that this program can be managed without a large store of materials because the basic skills being taught do not lend themselves to a wide range of literature or other resources. We did not pursue in detail whether Internet resources are being used to any extent in the program.

Issue 1.2

Historically, professional development opportunities for ABE instructors outside the provincial college system, has been limited. Before and during the 2-year pilot period, a number of professional development days were provided to all site instructors to prepare them to deliver this new program.

- 1.2.1. Has the delivery partner implemented adequate monitoring processes to ensure teaching and curriculum quality are optimum?

There is little to indicate that the program sponsors are engaged in much monitoring or program evaluation activity. Indeed, there is little that most could do about this as the only real teaching expertise residing in most sites rests with the instructor. The funding levels available are insufficient to engage any external expert advice. As for curriculum, this is obviously the responsibility of the Department of Education.

1.2.2. Did the partners feel that the prescribed instructor qualifications were sufficient?

Again, the partner organizations are not in a good position to judge this. Most of the instructors have education degrees and some have long experience in adult education settings. While there is some discussion in the Program Guide about differences between teaching adults and children, there is nothing that would suggest that specialized training in adult education is a requirement for ABE Level I teaching. Nevertheless this kind of specialization does exist and training in adult education is becoming more the norm for college teachers for example. However, it is not clear if such a requirement is either necessary or realistic in recruiting ABE instructors.

1.2.3. Did the instructors feel that the professional development opportunities provided to them were valuable and enhanced their ability to deliver the ABE Level I program?

Instructors were generally positive about the professional development sessions provided by the Department of Education, especially in terms of the opportunity afforded to meet their colleagues and to share their own experiences. The opportunity for an update on the program guide was also welcomed. On the other hand, there was concern on the part of some instructors that insufficient attention was paid to issues of adult learning and especially of learning disabilities.

1.2.4. Did the instructors feel prepared to deliver the new program, as outlined?

We did not pursue this point in sufficient detail to give a clear answer. Most of the instructors seem quite comfortable in their roles and many have the kind of experience that would warrant some confidence in their preparation. Certainly instructor preparation is not one of the major difficulties with the program.

Issue 1.3

With the exception of administering the CAAT to determine readiness for admission into Level II, testing/monitoring of students in ABE Level I programs had been ad hoc. Adults interested in joining this pilot were first assessed using the Brigance Inventory of Essential Skills. If then accepted into the program, regularly scheduled Brigance testing continued. The Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (CARA) tool was also provided to the sites as a supplementary testing tool for reading/writing miscue analysis and placement, if needed.

1.3.1. Do instructors feel Brigance assessment is an accurate tool for student skills measurement?

As indicated in the interview summary, while there was no severe criticism, the instructors did not share great enthusiasm for the Brigance. This prompted us to review the Inventory and seek external expert advice and reviews. One major issue that came to our attention is that this assessment is designed primarily for children and hence may not be the most suited for adults. Our review suggests that most of the material on the assessment is fairly neutral - that it not based on children's stories or other material that would make it obviously unsuitable for adults. The use of Imperial rather than metric units in the mathematics section is troublesome. However, although the Program Guide refers to making measurements in metric units, units such as cups and inches are used in the cooking and carpentry examples. This issue needs to be addressed more explicitly in the Program Guide, in terms of whether a single or a dual system is expected to be taught.

The most significant concern with the Brigance is that nothing seems to have been done to determine how well it matches the objectives in the Program Guide. The validity of the assessment for the purpose used here is contingent on this being done. More generally, a mechanism needs to be found to allow instructors to more clearly record if these objectives are being met. This could consist of an assessment instrument keyed specifically to the guide or a log which allows objectives to be checked off as they are met.

Neither the CARA nor any other assessment was used frequently enough to make any comment on their value.

1.3.2. Are appropriate monitoring mechanisms in place to follow clients through the process and track academic progress?

The records available for this program are better than most of what we have seen in other literacy or ABE programs. There is a clear emphasis here on tracking progress and the requirement for periodic reports has helped keep this in the forefront. Nevertheless, the reliance on the Brigance, the absence of any alternative way of quantifying progress, and the many gaps in the data still make it difficult to give a clear picture of student progress. In addition, inconsistencies in reporting, and differences in the reporting formats have made it difficult to compile the necessary summary statistics. In particular, embedding quantitative data in what are essentially anecdotal reports makes it impossible to summarize without manually re-entering the data.

Issue 1.4

1.4. The student-instructor ratio for Levels II and III ABE has always been higher than that required for Level I. This pilot increased the ratio for Level I from 6:1 to 12:1. Increasing the ratio would make the program more accessible to more students and the program would be more cost efficient. To facilitate the transition to Levels II/III it was necessary to explore a Level I ratio which would be high enough to ease students' transition to more independent study, and yet not be so high as to deprive students of one-to-one instructor attention often needed at this level.

1.4.1. Did students feel the ratio of 12:1 was adequate to address their learning needs?

While almost all students were satisfied with the ratio, the proportion "very satisfied" was the smallest among all of the satisfaction questions asked. On the other hand, almost all students were satisfied that the program was meeting their upgrading needs. Since most students would not have been in a class of 12 for a sustained period, the views on the ratio may not reflect experience with the maximum.

1.4.2. What is the overall cost of delivering the pilot project and the average cost per student?

Table 14 gives a breakdown of overall program costs by site, based on the levels of support from provincial sources and an estimate of the number of full-time equivalent students. Full-time equivalents are used to allow for continuous intake and exit and particularly for the fact that some students were in the program for only a short time. Costs covered by local funds and in-kind contributions are not included.

Table 14
Program and Unit Costs, 2003-04

Centre	Department of Education Contract	HRLE Student Support	FTE Students	Cost per FTE (Note 1)
Stephenville	\$42,000	\$ 16,600	12(?)	\$ 4,883
Corner Brook	42000	11317	10.3	5176
St. John's (Note 2)	42000	12700	12	4,558+
Plum Point	42000		6.7	6,269+
Fogo	42000		3.3	12,727 +
Marystown	42000	33940	10.2	7445
Gander	42000		9.1	4,615 +
Trepassey	42000			7,000+
Port Hope Simpson	42000		4.1	\$10,244+
Total including Department of Education Internal Expenditures	\$460,000 (approximate)	estimated average of \$1,675 per FTE Total approx. \$111,300	67.7	\$ 8,470 (approximate)
<p>Note1. HRLE costs were available for only four centres. The overall total includes an average of \$1,675 in HRLE costs. Individual centre costs where HRLE data were not available were not adjusted because such costs varied from centre to centre. The + sign for these centres indicates that these costs are not adjusted.</p> <p>Note 2. The St. John's centre employs a computer instructor under a Federal grant. We did not get information on amount of this grant. However, it seems likely that this would add \$3,000 to \$4,000 to the per-student cost of operating this centre. The + sign for St. John's indicates that actual cost was higher than indicated.</p>				

It is useful to compare the cost of this program to those for other similar programs. A 2001 study for the Department of Human Resources and Employment (now HRLE) placed the per-student cost of Level II and III ABE programs at between \$6,000 and \$8,000 (AERC, 2001). More recent data are not available for these programs in the college system. However, figures are available for two contemporary ABE Level I programs in the province, those at the Deer Lake Community Learning Centre and the Rabbittown Learners Program. Although these are funded from different sources from the pilot program, they are required to submit annual reports to the Department of Education.

The Deer Lake Centre had a total of 22 students in 2003-04. Of these, two were reported as completing the program, two as moving on to higher ABE levels and the remaining 18 continuing in the program. The number of full-time equivalents could not be computed because the length of attendance and hours per week are not available. However, the report indicated that students attended 10 to 30 hours per week. Taking 20 hours as the average, and allowing for some students not attending for the full year suggests that it is unlikely that there would have been more than 12 full time-equivalents. The Deer Lake Centre had expenditures of about \$102,000 for the year, or close to \$10,000 per student. This excludes any direct student support through HRLE or other sources.

The Rabbittown Centre reported having 19 ABE Level I students of whom five were reported as completing the program, three as leaving without completing, two moving on to higher ABE levels and the remainder either remaining in the program or moving to some other type of program. It appears as if this was primarily a full-time program, although we do not know the duration for each student. Taking the optimistic view that all attended for the full year, and averaging over expenditures of \$138,000 gives a per-student cost of about \$7,300 per student, again excluding direct student support.

1.4.3. Did students and instructors feel the program outcomes could be realized with this higher instructor-student ratio?

The answer to this question is partially included in the responses to 1.4.1. and 1.4.3. More specifically, the discussion of whether the program outcomes could be met was centered more around the length of time needed for a student to complete than around the ratio. This, in turn was seen as related to student abilities. In terms of the ratio, much depends on the balance between individualized and group instruction and student independent work. To the extent that a large amount of individual instruction is needed, a smaller ratio is desirable.

However, in a situation of either group instruction or independent student work, the ratio is less of an issue. Although it is clear that a combination of all of these is being used, we do not have sufficient information to address the actual or the desired balance.

1.4.4. Did instructors feel the 12:1 ratio was adequate to address students' learning needs?

Instructors were generally of the view that the 12:1 ratio is too high. Instructors seem to feel that some ratio between the previous 6:1 and the current 12:1 would be appropriate. The pilot is not actually a good test of the ratio because not all sites have had 12 students on a sustained basis, especially this year.

1.4.5. Beyond the commonly cited desire to improve reading and writing skills, what reason did the students cite for joining this ABE Level I Program?

The seven main choices given students in responding to this question covered the range from reading and writing to general academic upgrading to job related and personal interests. All were cited by most students as reasons for attending. However, when narrowed down to a main reason, the dominant areas were general upgrading and improving reading and writing skills.

It is likely that the various reasons for attending are conflated in the students' minds to the point that, when prompted, all reasons seem quite plausible. On the other hand, it is not at all obvious that it is plausible to expect this program, in itself to lead to post-secondary education or to improved job prospects. Questions that would get at whether students are being realistic in their expectations were not pursued.

Objective 2: Partnerships

Issue 2.1

The selection process for participation in the ABE Level I pilot specified that sites must have already established community partnerships. Successful proposals identified community partners who had agreed to commit resources to the sites for the duration of the two-year pilot (minimal). At present, the level and duration of partner-commitment varies. For this program to be sustained past the pilot period, partnerships are essential.

2.1.1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of community partnerships including financial (real and in-kind) and human resources, as it relates to the students.

There are some examples of partner agencies making small financial or in-kind contributions such as low rents or supplying furniture. Some of the sponsor agencies also consist of volunteer boards. However, most of the centres are actually operating under some community organization that employs professional staff, with administrative functions being performed by staff of the sponsoring agencies as part of their duties. Examples are the development associations, WISE, and the Community Education Network in Stephenville. For the most part, the sites operate as stand-alone programs, fully funded through the Department of Education funding.

The arrangement between the Department of Education and the local sponsoring agencies is considered by some to be the core partnership. However, this is perhaps better thought of as a contractual relationship rather than a partnership. In effect, the Department has established the program, the rules under which it operates and the reporting requirements. The responsibility of the centres is to operate the program and to report on the operation to the Department. Other than the general principle that the pilot program is to be run by community organizations, the notion of partnership has relatively little meaning in this case.

Beyond the sponsoring agencies themselves, there is little evidence of significant involvement on the part of other community groups. For the most part, the pilot program centres function as stand-alone operations.

2.1.2. Is there any correlation between student progress and the degree of community partnerships?

Given the above comments, there is no way to measure the “degree of community partnerships” and the data on progress cannot be broken down by centre because of the small numbers involved. Therefore, this question cannot be answered. Progress is much more likely to be a function of the program content, instruction and student selection and ability than of partnerships or other external features.

Objective 3. Increase program accessibility for adult students

Issue 3.1

With the increased instructor-student ratio, and the addition of 4 new sites to complement the existing 5 sites, more Level I students across the province have access to this service. Program standards dictated that students attend classes as scheduled. Although program standards were set equally for all sites, flexibility had to also be considered regarding student needs and accessibility.

3.1.1. Is the pilot sufficiently flexible to ensure accessibility to meet diverse student needs? Does this flexibility impact on client outcomes?

This question cannot be answered directly. Most centres have taken all available students. A few have had to be selective. Our sense is that, although some screening is done, selection has been more on a first-come first-served basis than on academic judgements. In the case of HRLE clients, who make up the majority, selection is done using that Department's Enhanced Screening and Assessment criteria and is thus out of the hands of the centre. All indicated that they feel they are capable of meeting diverse needs. However, there is also concern about students with learning disabilities and little evidence to indicate that the program or the instructors attend to this in any explicit way other than through individualized instruction.

3.1.2. Have students experienced academic success in the program? Identify enabling factors.

Students certainly perceive that they have experienced success. More objectively, there is evidence of gains of the order of two grade levels in reading and language and smaller gains in mathematics for the small number (fewer than 30) for which gain scores could be computed.

Because of the small numbers, breakdowns of factors contributing to gains could not be done. We therefore cannot identify specific enabling or inhibiting factors that may contribute to gains. Instructors seem to be of the view that progress is related to student ability, which suggests that gains could be improved by being more selective. However, greater selectivity makes little sense in situations of low enrolment.

3.1.3. Are attendance levels sufficient to make it likely that participants will successfully complete ABE Level I in a reasonable time?

For the most part, attendance levels are reasonably high. A few students with low attendance rates tend to lower the averages, but generally attendance does not seem to be a great problem.

3.1.4. Is there a correlation between attendance and program completion?

Since attendance rates were fairly high in most cases, there was insufficient variability to allow meaningful correlations to be computed. However, we did correlate days present and attendance rate with gain scores. None of these correlations was statistically significant. If student ability is the primary contributor to success, it may be argued that program content, attendance and other details are irrelevant and that opportunity to participate is the sufficient factor.

3.1.5. What percentage of students participating in the pilot completed ABE Level I? Do these students share any common characteristics? What percentage of these students have entered ABE Level II? Did the students feel prepared for success in Level II?

Close to one-third of the 2003-04 students completed the program and half of these have gone on to other education programs. Another 30% or so are continuing into a second year in the ABE Level I program. Again, the numbers are so small that breakdowns yield unstable statistics. However, there is some indication that females are more likely to complete than males and that those who had been in special education classes in school are less likely to complete than those who had not. There was no relationship between completion and age or grade completed in school. There were substantial differences in completion rate by centre. However, the numbers in this breakdown are so small that it would be inappropriate to infer that this is related to centre characteristics rather than the kinds of students who found their way into the centres in the first year.

Objective 4. Collect information on student needs throughout the province and identify barriers faced by students in meeting these needs. Solutions to overcoming these barriers are also to be explored.

Issue 4.1

While there is a reported need for ABE Level I instruction for adults, historically, the number of adults needing the service is greater than the number of adults who actually enrol, and succeed, in ABE programs. Issues related to accessibility and barriers (real or perceived) have been cited by adult students and could include issues related to child care, transportation, attendance, confidentiality, ill-health, employment and finances.

4.1.1. Do the students perceive any barriers to participation? What barriers do they cite?

The problem of low participation rates is reinforced by the data from this study, as it is clear that some centres will not be able to maintain 12 students in the long run. Unfortunately it is not possible to give a full picture of barriers to participation by studying participants. We would need data on those who might fit the profile of “needing” such a program in the communities at hand but who did not participate. It is understood that a larger “barriers” survey is now being planned by the Department of Education. That survey should shed considerably more light on this issue.

Students were asked about barriers to completion rather than to initial enrollment. The main reasons given were financial, family and transportation related. Program related reasons (difficulty, content, instruction and so on) were much less often cited. While we did not pursue in great detail student perceptions of the incentives being provided to income support clients, it might be inferred from the reasons given that these are seen as inadequate.

4.1.2. What is the demographic profile of students in this ABE Level I program?

The detailed demographic and educational profile of the 2003-04 participants was given in Tables 4 and 5. The main features of the demographic profile are the preponderance of women in the program, the wide age range of students, the very low income levels of both individuals and households and the preponderance of social assistance as a source of income. Almost all students had completed Grade 7 or higher in school, just under half had been in special education programs and about one-third had attended other adult education programs.

4.1.3. Is there any correlation between demographics and barriers?

Because so few gave each reason for non-completion, it was not possible to

develop meaningful breakdowns of these reasons by demographic profile variables.

- 4.1.4. Are client assessments upon entry to ABE Level I sufficient to identify additional life skills/ personal/ social/ financial supports required? Potential academic difficulties? Learning disabilities?

Other than initial Brigance scores, there is little indication of any formal assessments of students on entry to the program. However, instructors made many anecdotal comments about student abilities, disabilities and behaviours that were included in the periodic reports. Examples are comments on medical conditions, learning problems, specific goals expressed by the student, and behaviour issues such as aggressiveness, shyness, or attendance. It is clear that instructors learned a great deal about students in their day to day contacts and tried to use this knowledge to help students progress. At the same time, there is little to indicate any explicit diagnosis or program planning that would focus directly on student difficulties. There is certainly nothing comparable to the comprehensive “individual student support plans” that are found in the regular school system. The requirement to follow the provincial program reduces instructor ability to engage in any significant modification to meet student individual differences. In fact, despite the attention to barriers and to the need for flexibility, there seems to be a general view that students accepted into this program should be capable of completing it and that students with difficulties that would inhibit their ability to complete actually belong somewhere else.

Related to this, it is important to note that the Department of Human Resources Labour and Employment uses its own assessment system, referred to as “Enhanced Screening and Assessment” to judge who might be eligible for support to attend this and other programs. We did not look into this system in this study (although we have done so in the past). Nevertheless, this system might be expected to screen out those with poor prospects of completion. Without commenting on whether such screening is appropriate, the low completion rate suggests that this and other screening devices are having marginal impact.

- 4.1.5. Does this ABE Level I program present any barriers to students’ success? How can they be addressed? What are the cost implications, if any?

The reference here is taken to be to characteristics of the program itself rather than to student characteristics or issues of need and demand. While instructors did express some reservations about materials and resources to implement the program, there were few concerns about the program objectives or content.

Students also did not show significant concerns in this area. There seems to be no great reason to consider any major changes to the program itself, other than finding ways to strengthen the resources available.

Nevertheless, there are many broader issues related to the ability to implement this program beyond the pilot stage. These have to do with what we would call the gap between need and demand, whether the current implementation model is viable on a large scale, dealing with variations in student abilities and school experiences and costs.

Overall Assessment

It is useful to summarize all of the information available in the form of an overall assessment of the program. This is given in Table 15 with reference to the list of best practices presented earlier, using a 5 point scale from poor (1) to excellent (5). The ratings are supplemented by comments in each area. It should be recognized that, while grounded in the data, this assessment incorporates professional judgement on the part of the evaluators, based on broad experience in evaluating programs of this nature as well as more formalized programs in early childhood, elementary/secondary and post-secondary education.

Table 15
Overall Assessment of Pilot Based on Best Practices Categories

	Rating	Comments
1. Stability in recruitment, programming, financial support, and staffing	3	Generally more stable than many other programs of this nature. However, current financial commitments are only to June, 2005. Staff has been stable but continued stability is subject to funding. Recruitment is a problem at about half the sites.
2. Competent and dedicated staff	4	There is no question about staff competence or dedication. However, lack of specific training in adult education and learning disabilities is a concern.

	Rating	Comments
3. Appropriate matching of programs to student needs	2	Matching is at best informal based on instructor judgements. No formal diagnosis or treatment of learning disabilities.
4. Ability to address the personal and financial obstacles faced by many of the individuals served	3	Reasonably good support for HRLE clients but not for others. Important policy question of what level of incentive should be provided to encourage participation.
5. Professional development programs for staff	4	Better than most other program we have reviewed. Some fine tuning of the Department PD sessions would help.
6. Institutional support	3	Relatively high level of support from Department compared to other ABE programs. However, instructors feel that much more is needed. Little local institutional support for most sites.
7. Community support and involvement	3	Widely variable
8 Stakeholder support for programs involving partnerships	2	Little financial support beyond Department contract. Some partners are beneficiaries through rent.
9 Achievement and attainment targets and plans for meeting these targets	1	No formal targets or plans to meet these. However some effort is being made to measure progress. Completion rate is lower than some respondents would prefer.
10. Programs for recruitment and especially for retention of students.	2	Some sites in jeopardy because of small numbers. Fairly intensive recruitment efforts in some cases are not paying off. Some sites do not need to recruit but no plans exist to deal with excess demand.

Some Concerns

A number of concerns were identified in the evaluation, which could not be addressed under the specific questions. These include the viability of some centres in light of low enrolment, the opposite problem that centres in the larger communities are not meeting all demand, inconsistencies in record-keeping and reporting and the potential for conflict of interest when an instructor is also the administrator.

On the viability issue, it is difficult to see how the smaller centres can be sustained with the small enrollments that are found this year. The question, of course, is whether this can be solved by more intensive recruiting efforts. We do not believe that this is likely. If recruitment had been effective, it would be expected that enrolments would have increased from year one to year two. More likely these centres have exhausted the immediate demand in their communities. Because of transportation difficulties, it would also be difficult to argue that casting a wider net in nearby communities would be effective. A more plausible prospect would be simply to move the centre to another community. However, this would be difficult under the existing community-based model.

At the opposite extreme are the three or four communities in which demand is not being met. This is an easier problem to solve, as existing sites could be expanded to two or more classes if needed. However, this is contingent on funding being available. It is also likely that there are limits on how far a given site could be scaled up without encountering infrastructure and staffing issues. On the other hand, a larger centre might be able to employ specialized staff or to devise grouping schemes that would improve the ability to respond to diverse needs.

While the state of record-keeping in this program is considerably better than we have seen in some other evaluations, there remain many inconsistencies. The main difficulty, from an evaluator's perspective, is that most of the data are not in form that lends itself to producing summary statistics. While the reporting burden is fairly heavy, the reports are not sufficiently streamlined or standardized to allow summarized to be developed without a lot of manual effort. Advice needs to be sought on how record-keeping can be made both easier for instructors and more amenable to summary. We understand that there has been some reduction in the reporting requirements this year. However, we are not convinced that the problems of summarization and inconsistencies in such things as attendance and progress reporting have been solved.

Finally, there is concern that in some centres, the instructor is also the administrator and the sponsoring agency is the landlord. The problem here is that this presents an appearance of conflict of interest and makes the centre look more like a private operation than one that is community-based. While it is not far-fetched to consider a model in which the program is delivered by private interests, this would require different accountability mechanisms from those that are now in place.

Should the program continue in its current form, it is suggested that stronger assessment of potential demand be required and that sites not be selected unless there is a reasonable chance that they can attract close to 12 students. It is also suggested that contracts be modified to improve the status of data collection, ensure that the Department of Education can obtain access to all data and remove any possibility of conflict of interest involving the instructor or landlords as sponsors.

References

Department of Education. (2003). *Adult Basic Education Level I Program Guide*. St. John's: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Department of Education (2000). *Words to Live By: A Strategic Literacy Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador*. St. John's: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Department of Education. Literacy Branch Website.
<http://www.gov.nl.ca/edu/literacy/lit.htm>

Atlantic Evaluation and Research Consultants (2001). *Formative Evaluation of Promoting Access and Success Strategies*. St. John's: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Department of Human Resources and Employment.

Iowa State Department of Education. (1993). *Performance Indicators of Program Quality for Iowa's Adult Basic Education Programs*. Des Moines IA: Author.

Documents Specific to the Pilot Program

- ▶ request for proposals for ABE Level I pilot sites
- ▶ Responses to these proposals
- ▶ Best Practices document (Department of Education)
- ▶ Six-weekly reports submitted by sites to the Department of Education
- ▶ Summaries of these reports prepared by the Adult Education Consultant

Appendix A

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ABE LEVEL I PILOT PROGRAM EVALUATION
CLIENT SURVEY**

Final

Nov 8, 2004

May I speak with _____ please?

If the person is not available, attempt to identify a time to call back.

If the person is no longer at that number, identify yourself and your reason for calling and attempt to obtain the correct number. If no positive response thank the person and end the call.

When the correct person answers:

Hello, my name is first name. I work with Atlantic Consultants . We are doing a survey for the Dept of Education on the Adult Basic Education Program Level I that you attended last year. This is intended to look at the impact of the program and to assist in improving the program. Answering the questions is voluntary, you won't be identified in any way. The survey will take around 10 minutes.

Is it OK to go ahead and ask the questions?

If the respondent declines at this point thank him/her and end the call. If the respondent indicates that this is not a convenient time, try to make an appointment and follow up at that time.

If the respondent asks further questions, reiterate the purpose, length, confidentiality as needed. If respondent asks where we got their name, explain that they were provided by the centre that they attended. Answer any other questions to the extent possible.

If asked, give the following names of persons who can be contacted to verify the study and give further information:

Robert Crocker
Atlantic Evaluation and Research Consultants
Telephone 834-5288

Cindy Christopher
Department of Education
Telephone 729-6185

**NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: Code refusals to any question as 99
don't know to any question as 77**

For students who are also attending this year, stress that responses

to questions should refer to last year.

- 1 For interviews that could not be completed, please code:
 1. Respondent states that he/she did NOT attend ABE Level I Pilot Program
 2. Respondent refused to participate.
 3. Wrong phone number, not in service.
 4. About eight unsuccessful attempts to contact respondent.
 5. Other (please specify) _____

- 1A Information regarding completion received from instructor on site for those who could be reached by phone.
Coded as 1

- 2 Gender (DO NOT ASK)
 1. male
 2. female

- 3 Did you attend the Level I ABE pilot project in (name of centre) sometime between September , 003 and June, 2004?
 1. yes
 2. no
 3. don't know

If NO or DON'T KNOW to question 3, explain the program again to ensure that the respondent understands the question fully. Ask question 4 of ALL respondents.

- 4 Are you attending (*Did you attend*) the Level I ABE pilot project in (name of centre) this present year?
 1. yes
 2. no

If the response to questions 3 and 4 are NO, thank the respondent and terminate the interview.

If the response to question 3 is NO and the response to question 4 is YES, clarify that they did NOT attend at all between Sept 2003 and June 2004 and terminate the interview. Explain that we are only doing the telephone survey of those who attended last year but we will be speaking with students who

began ABE Level I Pilot Program in Sept 2004 when we visit their community.

If YES to question 3 and NO to question 4, go to question 5 .
If YES to question 3 and YES to question 4, go to question 10A.

- 5 Did you complete the Level 1 ABE program?
1. yes
 2. no
 3. don't know

If NO to question 5, go to 7

- 5A Any other information received from instructor for those who were not interviewed.
-

- 6 Did you receive any kind of certificate or diploma on completion?
1. yes
 2. no
 3. don't know

If YES to question 5, go to question 11.

- 7 I am going to read a list of reasons why some people are unable to complete their programs. For each one that I read can you tell me if "yes or no" this was a reason in your case?
(Do not read "don't know")
(Code ALL that apply).
(Note to interviewer: For coding purposes yes = 1, no = 2, don't know = 77, NA = 88)

a	Were financial difficulties a reason that you did not complete the program?	yes	no	don't know	NA
b	What about family responsibility?	yes	no	don't know	NA
c	Did you lose interest in the program?	yes	no	don't know	NA

d	Was it too difficult?	yes	no	don't know	NA
e	Were problems with the instructors a reason in your not completing the program?	yes	no	don't know	NA
f	Was the quality of instruction a reason in not completing?	yes	no	don't know	NA
g	What about the facilities, was that a reason?	yes	no	don't know	NA
h	Was the location of the school a reason?	yes	no	don't know	NA
i	Were the materials that were available a reason for not completing the program?	yes	no	don't know	NA
j	Were transportation difficulties a reason?	yes	no	don't know	NA
k	What about illness or health related reasons?	yes	no	don't know	NA
l	Are there any other reasons that I did not mention why you were unable to complete your program?	yes	no	don't know	NA

If YES, please note reasons

m _____

n _____

If respondent gave ONLY one reason go to question 9.

8 Can you tell me the main reason that you did not complete this program?

1. _____
2. don't know

9 Sometimes it is possible to make changes that would help people complete the programs they begin. I am going to read a list of possible changes and I would like for you to tell me “yes or no” that if changing these would have helped you to finish your program. **(ONLY read those for which respondent answered YES in Question**

7)

(Do not read “don’t know”)

(Code ALL that apply).

(Note to interviewer: For coding purposes yes = 1, no = 2, don’t know = 77, NA = 88)

a	Would more financial assistance have helped you?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
b	Assistance with family responsibility?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
c	A more interesting program?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
d	More individual instruction?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
e	Better quality of instruction?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
f	Improved facilities?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
g	Improved materials?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
h	The center located closer to your home?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
i	Assistance with transportation?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
j	Are there any other reasons that I did not mention that would have helped you to complete this program?	yes	no	don’t know	NA

If YES, please note reasons

k _____

l _____

If respondent gave ONLY one reason go to question 11.

10 Can you tell me the main thing that might have helped you complete this program?

1. _____

2. don't know

Ask question 10A ONLY to students who have returned to ABE this year. For others, go to question 11.

10A Can you tell me why you returned to Level I ABE this year? Please specify _____

11 I am now going to read a list of reasons why some people decide to take part in an ABE Level I program. After I read each reason, can you tell me "yes or no" if this was one of the reasons why you decided to attend this program?

(Do not read "don't know")

(Code all that apply).

(Note to interviewer: For coding purposes yes = 1, no = 2, don't know = 77, NA = 88)

a	Was it to improve your reading and writing skills?	yes	no	don't know	NA
b	Was it for general academic upgrading?	yes	no	don't know	NA
c	For other skills training such as math?	yes	no	don't know	NA
d	To improve your chances of getting a job?	yes	no	don't know	NA
e	To allow you to help your children with their education?	yes	no	don't know	NA
f	To allow you to go to trades school or university	yes	no	don't know	NA

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|-----|----|------------|----|
| g | For personal interest | yes | no | don't know | NA |
| h | Are there any other reasons that I did not mention why you decided to do ABE Level I? | yes | no | don't know | NA |

If YES, please note reasons

i _____

j _____

If respondent gave ONLY one reason, go to question 13.

12 Can you tell me the main reason why you decided to attend this program?

1. _____
77. don't know

I now have a few questions about your attendance while you were in this ABE Level I. (For those CURRENTLY attending:) *When answering this question, please think of the time between Sept 2003 and June 2004. Do not think of since Sept of this year.* (For those who only attended for a short period of time, ask them to think of while they were attending to answer this question)

13 First of all *last year* , did you attend

1. almost all of the time
2. about three quarters of the time
3. about half of the time
4. about one quarter of the time or
5. hardly any of the time?

Go to 18 for those who attended almost all of the sessions.

14 I am going to read a list of some reasons why people sometimes do not attend regularly when they are doing a program such as this. (For those CURRENTLY attending:) *When answering this question, please think of the time between Sept 2003 and June 2004. Do not*

think of since Sept of this year. I would like for you to tell me “yes or no” if these reasons interfered with you not attending more of the sessions that you did.

(Do not read “don’t know”)

(Code all that apply).

(Note to interviewer: For coding purposes yes = 1, no = 2, don’t know = 77, NA = 88)

a	financial reasons	yes	no	don’t know	NA
b	family responsibility	yes	no	don’t know	NA
c	lost interest in the program	yes	no	don’t know	NA
d	it was too difficult	yes	no	don’t know	NA
e	problems with the instructors	yes	no	don’t know	NA
f	transportation difficulties	yes	no	don’t know	NA
g	illness	yes	no	don’t know	NA
h	Are there any other reasons that I did not mention that interfered with you not attending more often?	yes	no	don’t know	NA

If YES, please note reasons

i _____

j _____

If respondent gave ONLY one reason, go to question 16.

15 Can you tell me the main reason that you did not attend more of the sessions?

1. _____

77. don’t know

16 Again, on occasion things might be changed that would help make it easier to attend more of the sessions of programs that they are doing. I am going to read a list of factors and I would like for you to tell me “yes or no” that if changing these would have helped you to attend more of your sessions.

ONLY read those for which respondent answered **YES** in

Question 7)

(Do not read “don’t know”)

(Code ALL that apply).

(Note to interviewer: For coding purposes yes = 1, no = 2, don’t know = 77, NA = 88)

a	Would more financial assistance have helped you?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
b	Assistance with family responsibility?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
c	A more interesting program?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
d	More individual instruction?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
e	Better quality of instruction?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
f	Improved facilities?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
g	Improved materials?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
h	Located closer to your home?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
i	Assistance with transportation?	yes	no	don’t know	NA

j Are there any other reasons that I did not mention that might have helped you to attend more often? yes no don't know NA

If YES, please note reasons

k _____

l _____

If respondent gave ONLY one reason go to question 18.

17 Can you tell me the main thing that might have helped you attend more of the sessions?

1. _____
2. don't know

18 How successful do you feel you feel you were in ABE Level I? Do you feel that you did

1. better than you expected
2. about as well as you expected or
3. not as well as you expected?

19 How do you feel about the amount of work that you had to do? Was it

1. more than you expected
2. about as much as you expected or
3. less that you expected?

20 I am now going to read some statements about the ABE Level I program. For each one that I read, I would like for you to tell me if you were very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. (For those CURRENTLY attending:) *When answering this question, please think of the time between Sept 2003 and June 2004. Do not think of since Sept of this year.*

very satisfied satisfied dissatisfied very dissatisfied

a	The overall quality of the program. Were you very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?	1	2	3	4
b	How about the overall quality of the teaching?	1	2	3	4
c	The opportunity to start the program when you wanted to start it	1	2	3	4
d	The content of the material that was covered	1	2	3	4
e	The technology that was available such as computers	1	2	3	4
f	The type of classroom facilities that you had	1	2	3	4
g	The financial help that was available for you	1	2	3	4
h	The class size; number of students	1	2	3	4
i	The way in which your work was graded or marked	1	2	3	4
j	Individual attention from the instructor for your particular needs	1	2	3	4
k	The distance you had to travel from your home to school	1	2	3	4
l	The program addressing your particular needs for upgrading	1	2	3	4
m	The hours school was open	1	2	3	4

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| n | The respect shown to you by staff and instructors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| o | The material and learning resources that were available | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- 21 Would you
- 1 strongly recommend
 - 2 recommend or
 - 3 not recommend ABE Level I to your family and friends?

Ask question 22 only to those respondents STILL attending.

- 22 Sometimes people make plans when they are attending school as to what they will do as soon they finish their program . I am going to read a list of plans that some people make for their immediate future and I would like you to tell me if you plan to do any of these things once you finish this program. If you have a plan that I do not read, please tell me what it is. Do you plan to: (READ LIST TWICE IF NECESSARY, PROBE FOR ONE PLAN, FOR EXAMPLE IF THEY MENTION TWO ITEMS, WHAT WILL THEY LIKELY DO FIRST)
1. go to ABE Level II/III?
 2. go to trades school or university?
 3. try to get a job in the province?
 4. leave the province to find a job?
 5. stay home with family?
 6. (DO NOT READ) other (Please specify) _____
 7. (DO NOT READ) no plans/don't know

If STILL ATTENDING, go to question 28

23 I am going to read a list of things that people sometimes do when they are no longer going to a program such as ABE. I would like for you to tell me “yes or no” which of these things you have done since you went to ABE Level I. Please remember, that this is SINCE you did your ABE Level I program.
 (Do not read “don’t know”)
 (Code ALL that apply).
 (Note to interviewer: For coding purposes yes = 1, no = 2, don’t know = 77, NA = 88)

a	Have you gone to ABE Level II/III? If NO or DON’T KNOW go to c	yes	no	don’t know	NA
b	Have you completed ABE level II/III?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
c	Have you gone to trades school or university? If NO or DON’T KNOW go to e	yes	no	don’t know	NA
d	Have you completed a program at trades school or iniversity?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
e	Have you looked for work in the province? If NO or DON’T KNOW go to g	yes	no	don’t know	NA
f	Have you worked in the province	yes	no	don’t know	NA
g	Have you left the province looking for work? If NO or DON’T KNOW go to i	yes	no	don’t know	NA
h	Have you worked outside the province?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
i	Have you stayed home to care for your family?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
j	Have you done anything else such as this since ABE Level I that I did not mention?	yes	no	don’t know	NA
k	_____				
l	_____				

- 24** I am going to read a list of plans that some people make for their immediate future and I would like you to tell me if you plan to do any of these things over the next year or so. If you have a plan that I do not read, please tell me what it is. Do you plan to: (READ LIST TWICE IF NECESSARY, PROBE FOR ONE PLAN, FOR EXAMPLE IF THEY MENTION TWO ITEMS, WHAT WILL THEY LIKELY DO FIRST)
1. (Read ONLY to those who have NOT completed ABE Level I) Return to ABE Level I?
 2. (Read ONLY to those who have NOT participated in ABE Level II) Go to ABE Level II/III?
 3. Go to trades school or university?
 4. Try to get a job in the province?
(For those currently working)
To continue working?
 5. Leave the province to find a job?
 6. Stay home with family?
 7. (DO NOT READ) other (Please specify) _____
 8. (DO NOT READ) no plans/don't know

Ask question 25 ONLY of those who have participated in Level II/III ABE.
(Refer back to question 23a)

- 25** I believe that you said you have gone to Level II/III ABE since you were in Level I ABE. Are you able to tell me how well ABE Level I prepared you to do ABE Level II/III. Do you feel that you were
1. well prepared
 2. somewhat prepared or
 3. not at all prepared do ABE Level II/III?

Ask question 26 ONLY of those who have participated in post secondary education.(Refer back to question 23c)

- 26** I believe that you said you have participated in post secondary education since you were in Level 1 ABE. Are you able to tell me how well prepared you feel you were to participate in post secondary education. Do you feel that you were
1. well prepared

2. somewhat prepared or
3. not at all prepared to attend post secondary education?

Ask question 27 ONLY of those who have looked for work in or outside the province. (Refer back to question 23e, f, g, h)

- 27 I believe that you said you have looked for (had) work since you were in Level 1 ABE. Are you able to tell me how well prepared you feel you were to find a job since you went to ABE Level I? Do you feel that you were
1. well prepared
 2. somewhat prepared or
 3. not at all prepared to find a job?

I now have a few questions about your education background

- 28 What was the last grade that you successfully completed in regular school?
(Code last grade completed, IE Grade 7 code as 7)
77. don't know
 99. refused

- 29 While you were in school, did you attend regular classes?
1. yes
 2. no
 77. don't know
 99. refused

- 30 While you were in school, did you ever attend any special education classes or remedial courses?
1. yes
 2. no
 77. don't know
 99. refused

- 31 Have you ever gone to any other education, training courses or upgrading besides regular school and ABE programs?
1. yes
 2. no
 77. don't know

If NO or DON'T KNOW, go to question 35

32 Can you tell me what this program was?

33 When did you attend this program? (Note the year) (If several, the last one attended)

34 Did you complete this (*name of program?*) (If several, the last one attended)

1. yes
2. no
77. don't know

I would now like to ask you a few questions about your work history.

35 Have you ever worked at a job for which you were paid money or wages?

1. yes
2. no
77. don't know

36 Have you ever owned your own business?

1. yes
2. no
77. don't know

If NO to BOTH questions 35 and 36, go to question 44.

If YES to EITHER question 35 or 36, go to question 37.

37 How many different jobs have you since leaving regular school? (DO NOT READ LIST)

1. 1 or 2
2. 3 or 4
3. 5 or more
77. don't know

38 Were you working in the year immediately before you began your ABE Level I program?

1. yes
2. no

77. don't know

If NO or DON'T KNOW, go to 40

39 Can you tell me what kind of work you did in the year before you began your ABE program?

40 Are you now working

- 1 full time
- 2 part time or
- 3 are you presently unemployed?

If presently unemployed, go to question 42

41 Can you tell me what kind of work you presently do?

If working, go to question 43

42 Can you tell me what year you last worked (*or were self employed*)?
(DO NOT READ LIST)

- 1. 2004
- 2. between 2000 and 2003
- 3. between 1997 and 1999
- 4. between 1993 and 1996
- 5. 1995 or before
- 6. was never employed
- 77 don't know

43 Can you tell me what kinds of work you have done in the past?
(Please specify)

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

44 Do you (not your partner or spouse) presently receive any income from these sources:

(Note to interviewer: For coding purposes yes = 1, no = 2,

don't know = 77, NA = 88. refused = 99)

a	salary or wages	yes	no	don't know	NA	refused
b	self employment income	yes	no	don't know	NA	refused
c	employment insurance	yes	no	don't know	NA	refused
d	social assistance	yes	no	don't know	NA	refused
e	disability pensions or allowances	yes	no	don't know	NA	refused
f	Do you have any other any other source of income that I did not mention	yes	no	don't know	NA	refused
	If YES, What is this source					
g	_____					
h	_____					
i	_____					

We now have just a few more questions and then we will be finished.

45 What is your marital status? (DO NOT READ LIST)

- 1. single**
- 2. married including common law**
- 3. divorced or separated**
- 4. widowed**
- 99. refused**

46 Do you have any dependent children?

- 1. yes**
- 2. no**
- 99. refused**

If NO or REFUSED, go to 49

47 How many dependent children do you have? (Note the number)

48 Are you mainly responsible for the care of your children?

- 1. yes
- 2. no
- 99. refused

49 Do you have any adults living in your home who depend on you for their care?

- 1. yes
- 2. no
- 99 refuse

If NO or REFUSED, go to 52

**50 How many dependent adults do you have living in your household?
(Note the number)**

51 Are you mainly responsible for the care of these adults?

- 1. yes
- 2. no
- 77. don't know

52 Are you

- 1. less than 20 years of age
- 2. between 20 and 24 years of age
- 3. between 25 and 29 years of age
- 4. between 30 and 34 years of age
- 5. between 35 and 39 years of age
- 6. between 40 and 44 years of age
- 7. between 45 and 49 years of age
- 8. between 50 and 54 years of age or
- 9. 55 or more
- 99. refused

53 Approximately what was your individual income in 2003? Was it

- 1. less than \$10,000
- 2. between \$11,000 and \$15,000
- 3. between \$16,000 and \$20,000
- 4. between \$21,000 and \$25,000
- 5. between \$26,000 and \$30,000
- 6. between \$31,000 and \$35,000

- 7. between \$36,000 and \$40,000
- 8. between \$41,000 and \$45,000
- 9. between \$46,000 and \$50,000\
- 10. more than \$50,000
- 77. don't know
- 99. refused

54 Approximately what was your household income in 2003? Was it

- 1. less than \$10,000
- 2. between \$11,000 and \$15,000
- 3. between \$16,000 and \$20,000
- 4. between \$21,000 and \$25,000
- 5. between \$26,000 and \$30,000
- 6. between \$31,000 and \$35,000
- 7. between \$36,000 and \$40,000
- 8. between \$41,000 and \$45,000
- 9. between \$46,000 and \$50,000\
- 10. more than \$50,000
- 77. don't know
- 99. refused

55 Is there anything else you would like to tell us about this ABE Program?

Appendix B

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ABE LEVEL I PILOT PROGRAM EVALUATION
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: SITE LEVEL**

Final: November 5, 2004

In most cases, respondents will be aware of the evaluation and of its general purposes. The respondent should be clear that the study is being undertaken on behalf of the Department of Education. If necessary, it should be made clear that the work is being conducted under contract and that the contractor is not an agency of government. More detailed background on the consultants should be given only if requested.

Respondents should be informed that their responses are confidential, that this is not an evaluation of the performance of individuals, and that results will not be reported in ways that will permit individuals to be identified.

This particular protocol is designed for respondents who are directly connected to the ABE Level I pilot sites. Modified versions, especially tailored to government officials, partner agencies and other informants will be devised.

These interviews are to be conducted in conversational mode. Questions are intended as guides to the kind of information needed from informants and should not be posed as if being read from a script. Although many questions seem to be worded to yield yes/no answers, the conversational tone is intended to encourage elaboration and probes should be used where needed for this purpose. In practice, many informants will likely elaborate without much probing.

Some parts of the interview are concerned with locating data sources and assessing the state of data files and other information sources. Follow-up will likely be necessary in many cases where specific financial information or student records are needed.

Interviews will not be tape-recorded. Responses will be recorded as field notes directly on the interview form. Other issues raised by the respondents, as well as the interviewer's notes about the site, will be recorded at the end of the form.

Respondent _____

Interviewer _____

Organization _____

Date _____

Position _____

Introduction

First, I have a couple of general questions about this community and this ABE site.

- 1. First, can you tell me something about how this site came to be established (probe for driving forces, lead persons and organizations, previous activities of this nature)**

(Question 2 and 3 for board members and others who are not directly employed by the site)

- 2. What is your position in the community [or with government or other agency as appropriate]?**

Position title or description:

- 3. How does this relate to ABE or how did this bring you to become involved?**

(Question 4 and 5 for staff)

- 4. What other similar types of work have you done?**

- 5. What is your educational background?**

- 1 Goals and objectives of the centre**

- 1.1 Do you know if any needs assessment or other kind of work was done to determine the need for this program in this area? (Probe for what was done and obtain copy of any report)**

- 1.2 Does the program have a written goal or mission statement? (Obtain copy if possible or ask for its content)**

If no such statement, go to 1.5

- 1.3 What process was used to develop this statement?**
- 1.4 Is this statement accessible to staff and clients?**
- 1.5 Does the program have a set of specific objectives? Probe for completion targets, achievement targets, etc.**
- 1.6 Do you believe that these objectives are consistent with the goals?**
- 1.7 Do you feel that these objectives are reasonably attainable?
(Probe for examples of difficulties in meeting the objectives)**
- 1.8 Does the program have a way of updating its goals and objectives?
and what is this?**

2 Planning processes and policies

- 2.1 Do you have a strategic plan or process designed to look to the long term viability of the centre?
(Obtain copy if possible)**

If no such plan go to 2.3

- 2.2 Who is involved in this process?**
- 2.3 Do you have policies on matters such as safety, supervision, attendance, smoking and so on?
(Obtain copies of documents if possible. Note areas where policies exist and what they are if no documents exist)**

If no such policies, go to 2.4

- 2.3 How are students informed about these policies?**
- 2.4 Do you have policies and procedures concerning liability and conformity to safety and other regulations? What are they?**

3 Access and Recruitment

- 3.1 How do you go about recruiting students or informing potential students about your centre?**

- 3.2 How well does your capacity match the number of people interested in attending?**
- 3.3 If there is a shortage of applicants ask: Do you have any plans to recruit more students? What are these plans?**
- 3.4 If there is a surplus of applicants ask: What processes do you have in place to select students from the available pool?**
- 3.5 To what extent do you think your program is meeting the demand for ABE Level I in this area?**
- 3.6 What is your view of the prospects for continuing to recruit students in future years?**
- 3.7 What is your view of whether any barriers exist to student participation? What are some of the main barriers?**
- 3.8 What are your hours of operation? Are they different for students and for staff?
(List actual hours for students and for staff)**
- 3.9 Do you feel that these hours are appropriate for your target group?**

We have a few questions now about attendance

- 3.10 What are your expectations about attendance?**
- 3.12 Do students generally meet these expectations?**
- 3.13 Obviously not everyone who begins the program completes it. Are you concerned about attrition in this centre?
(Probe for numbers who begin but who do not complete)**
- 3.14 In your opinion, why do some students not complete the program?**

4 Facilities and equipment

Note: A separate check list will be used to obtain factual information on facilities and equipment. This will be completed following observation of facilities and commentary by staff.

- 4.1 Who owns the facilities you occupy?**

- 4.2 Is rent being paid? How much?**
- 4.3 Who looks after maintenance?**
- 4.4 Do you feel that the space you have available is adequate for the number of participants?**
- 4.5 Do you feel that the space is properly heated and ventilated?**
- 4.6 Are there any safety hazards around the facilities that are of concern to you?**
- 4.7 Do you feel that the facility has adequate washroom facilities?**
- 4.8 Do you feel that the furnishings adequate and properly suited to the program content and structure?**
- 4.9 Are the facilities available for staff planning and preparation adequate?**
- 5 Program content**
- 5.1 Do you feel that the provincial ABE Program Guide is appropriate for your program or your students? (Probe for reasons if not appropriate)**
- 5.2 To what extent do you follow the provincial program guide?**
- 5.3 Do you feel that the program guide is consistent with the goals and objectives of this location? (Probe for differences)**
- 5.4 Is the duration of the program adequate to achieve the objectives? (Probe for whether more or less time is needed, how time should be distributed)**
- 5.5 Do you feel that the program content is consistent with the backgrounds of your students?**
- 5.6 Do you feel that the program is sufficiently well documented that it could continue if there were a change in staff? (If the instructor left, would the material that he/she developed be left for the new instructor?) (Probe for whether the program is driven by the instructor)**

6 Instructional materials

6.1 Do you feel that you have appropriate and sufficient instructional materials available? (Probe for any shortages or limitations)

6.2 Do you feel that the instructional strategies and materials being used are appropriate for the backgrounds of your students?

6.3 Do you feel that the instructional strategies and materials are appropriate to the program content?

7 Governance Management and Partnerships

7.1 Can you tell me how this centre is governed? Who is responsible for the major decisions?

7.2 What groups are involved in governing this centre?

7.3 What partner agencies have a formal connection to this centre?

7.4 Can you tell me what roles are played by partners?

7.5 What kinds of contributions are being made by the partners? (Probe for financial, in-kind support for facilities or materials, professional expertise)

7.6 Do you get any other money from any other sources except the Dept of Education? For example, such as fundraising and so on?

If no, go to 8.1

7.7 Where does this money come from?

7.8 About how much do you get from these other sources?

8 Record-Keeping

**8.1 Can you tell me how you keep progress records (performance) on individual participants?
(Copies of all forms should be obtained if possible. This would also be a good time to indicate that we may need to see or copy all individual progress records of LAST year's students INCLUDING those who did**

NOT complete the program) (Note: if they cannot be copied and obtained at the time of the visit, request that they be copied and sent to our offices within the next week.)

- 8.1 Do you keep individual attendance records of students? (We need to get COMPLETE attendance records on each student who was registered even for ONE day last year. This should be available to be copied while we are visiting the site. Summaries would be great if they include when the student began, how many sessions he/she attended, and if the program was completed. If summaries are not available, obtain daily attendance records. (Note: if they cannot be copied and obtained at the time of the visit, request that they be copied and sent to our offices within the next week.)**
- 8.2 How many students have begun the program since Sept. 2004?**
- 8.3 How many of these are students that attended last year?**
- 8.4 How many students are still in the program this year?**
- 8.5 What kinds of records are kept on your budget and financial transactions?
(Determine if spreadsheets or other computer-based records are used?)**
- 8.6 Who looks after the finances for this centre?**
- 8.7 Do you know if there are any provisions for auditing your books?**
- 9 Staffing**
- 9.1 Do you feel that having one staff member for 12 or so students is adequate?
(Probe for what the respondent feels is an appropriate ratio)**
- 9.2 Do you feel that your own training and experience are appropriate for the job you have to do? (Reword this in third person if respondent is not staff)**
- 9.3 What professional development activities have you taken part in since coming to this position? (Again, reword as appropriate for non-staff)**
- 9.4 For non staff: Are there any major difficulties in finding staff for this**

program?

- 9.5 Are volunteers used in any way at this centre?**
- 9.6 If volunteers: What kinds of work do the volunteers do?**
- 9.7 If no volunteers: Do you know why volunteers are not being used?**
- 9.8 If volunteers: Are there any difficulties in finding volunteers for this work? Do you know what efforts have been made to attract volunteers?**
- 9.9 To what extent are students able to help each other in this program**

10 Assessment

- 10.1 What is your view of the Brigance test as a measure of student skill assessment?**
- 10.2 What procedures are in place to determine if individuals have attained the objectives of the program?**
- 10.3 Do you have any form of certificate or diploma at the end?**
- 10.4 Do you have any kind of ceremony for graduates?**
- 10.5 Do you have any provision for long term care of student records? for example what would happen if someone asked for student records in five years?**
- 10.6 Have you conducted any form of internal evaluation of your program? If yes, what kind and what were the results?**

11 Attention to Diversity

- 11.1 Do you feel that your program is flexible enough to respond to wide variations in the backgrounds of students who may start the program?**
- 11.2 Are your facilities accessible to disabled persons?**
- 11.3 Do you know if any efforts have been made to make the program attractive and accessible to persons with learning or other disabilities?**

- 11.4 Do you have any students who have identifiable physical, developmental or learning disabilities? What are some examples of such disabilities?**
- 11.5 How do you accommodate those with these types of disabilities?**
- 11.6 Do you have any exclusions based on disability, age or other factors?**

Interviewer Observations

- 1 Condition of facilities**
 - 2 Availability and condition of records**
 - 3 Nature and extent of materials**
 - 4 Approximate size of facilities/number of rooms**
 - 5 Books/library**
 - 6 Computer facilities**
 - 7 Cafeteria/food services**
 - 8 Washroom facilities**
 - 9 Location relative to community**
 - 10 Accessible to those in wheelchairs, including washroom**
 - 11 Number of students at site during visit.**
 - 12 Items for follow-up**
 - 13 Documents obtained**
 - 14 Documents to be obtained if possible. If they are not able to be obtained during the visit, please request that they be forwarded to our offices within the next week. If they do not exist, please note.**
-
- 1 Needs Assessment**
 - 2 Goal or mission statement**
 - 3 Strategic plan**
 - 4 Policies on safety , smoking, attendance, etc.**
 - 5 Performance records**
 - 6 Attendance records**