

**2017**  
**TEACHING ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN LANGUAGE**  
**CLASSES SURVEY**

**Results Report**

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# Teaching Essential Skills in Language Classes Survey - Results Report

## Introduction

The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback on the use of resources by English as a Second Language (ESL) professionals to teach workplace skills, in particular, the Canadian Language Benchmarks and Workplace Essential Skills Comparative Framework document. The feedback provided will help NorQuest College and The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks better align this document to the needs of the students and teachers.

The survey instrument was designed by the Faculty of Foundational, Career and Intercultural Studies, reviewed by external stakeholders, and administered by the NorQuest Research Office.

## Methodology

Data was collected from October 17 to November 6, 2017. Email invitations were sent to ESL professionals across Canada by staff from NorQuest's Faculty of Foundational & Intercultural Studies. In total, 273 ESL professionals responded, with 67% completing the entire survey.

## Key Findings

Use of the resource *Relating CLB to Essential Skills: A Comparative Framework* was low, overall. About one in five participants was both aware of and used the document:

- 60% of participants were aware of the resource
- Among those aware of the resource, 55% had used it (21% of all survey participants)

Responses from participants who were aware of the resource but didn't use it suggest that the resource does not meet the current needs of instructors. When asked to check all that apply, most (62%) checked one or more of *didn't meet their needs* (27%), *was not relevant* (22%), *was not helpful* (8%), or *was not suitable for student needs* (5%).

Among those who did use the resource, most said they liked the resource because it is practical (45%). This valued practical element is reinforced by responses indicating that participants are most likely to use the document for curriculum development (27%) or as an information reference (24%). A top recommendation for improving the resource also pointed to the need for resources with clear practical applications: participants requested improvements should include examples of how the information could be used in class, either through links to other materials (22%), through examples (19%), or with more lesson plans, samples tasks, and teaching materials (5%).

Among those who are teaching Essential Skills many participants are using varied specific resources (25%), creating their own resources (18%), using other unspecified resources (10%), or not using any resources (8%). Among those not aware of Essential Skills but who are teaching workplace preparation, resources were also varied, with 18% using internet resources, 15% using varied job related materials, and 15% using no resources. A comprehensive, single-source

resource may benefit instructors and help to standardize workplace preparation instruction across the country.

More than half (53%) of participants said they were using the internet to find resources to address workplace preparation (23%) or to teach Essential Skills to EAL/ESL learners (28%), or said they were looking for the *Relating CLB to Essential Skills* document online but could not find it (2%). Thirty-eight percent (38%) said they were using internet resources for the development of Essential Skills lesson plans and materials. This indicates that future resources should be available online. Further, participants suggested that materials could be improved by increasing the functionality of online resources with links (22%; top improvement response).

Participants did not agree about at what CLB level Essential Skills can or should be introduced (for either literacy or non-literacy classes). Most felt Essential Skills could be introduced pre-benchmark (20%) in non-literacy classes, and 75% agreed that Essential Skills should be incorporated into literacy classes. Many (18%) felt that *Relating CLB to Essential Skills: A Comparative Framework* could be improved by better aligning the document with the revised CLB (18%), or showing how essential skills align at lower CLB levels (14%). Along with some text-input responses supporting the need, the data suggests a demand for more resources for lower-level workplace preparation teaching.

Top skills instructors felt would be suitable for their classroom in non-literacy and literacy classes were reading (88%; 69% in literacy), oral communication (88%; 69% in literacy), and working with others (84%; 67% in literacy). Developing these topics may be most impactful for all learners. In non-literacy classes, writing (87%) was also a priority. In literacy classes, numeracy (80%) was the top suitable skill identified.

### Among LINC Providers

Some key differences were observed among those participants who said they only provide LINC programming (compared to those who only provided other types of programming). In the LINC group, participants were slightly more likely (84% compared to 81%) to be familiar with Essential Skills. However, they were much less likely to:

- Have heard of the *Relating CLB to Essential Skills* resource (47% compared to 66%)
- Have used the *Relating CLB to Essential Skills* document (36% compared to 68%) among those who had heard of the document
- Believe essential skills should be incorporated into literacy classes (72% compared to 82%)

## Survey Results

### Questions and Responses

#### Which type of programming do you work in? (select all that apply)


Note: Percentage does not calculate to 100 due to multiple responses.

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
LINC		63%	145
EAL/ESL Class		34%	79
Language for Work		17%	40
Workplace Training		10%	22
Bridge to employment		10%	22
Occupation Specific Language Training		10%	23
Other (please specify)		10%	23
English for Academic Purposes		9%	21
Conversation circles		7%	15
On the job training		3%	6
Pre-arrival services		1%	3
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>230</b>

#### Responses for **Other (please specify)**:

- Adult Learning Program (ALP)
- CALA
- Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and assessment
- Community Adult Literacy
- Enhanced Language Training (ELT) workplace culture and Communication
- English as an Additional Language (EAL) support college programs
- English for Workplace (EFW)
- General Educational Development (GED) preparation
- Instructor/Teacher/Tutor education and training such as TESOL with supporting resources (e.g. writing centres and language learning labs)
- Literacy and Basic Skills
- Literacy Essential Skills
- Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA)
- Reaching out within communities through volunteering with refugees and homes for pregnant and new mothers or those with mobility issues
- Supporting youth upgrading

### Are you familiar with Essential Skills?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		84%	193
No		16%	37
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>230</b>

### Do you address workplace preparation in your teaching? If so, what material/resources do you use?

30 individuals responded, including 10 who gave multiple responses.  
 Note: Percentage does not calculate to 100 due to multiple responses.

Responses	Percentage	Number of similar responses
Resources from the Internet search including use of Alberta Works and Government of Canada	23%	7
Job related – resume, interviews, job search, guest speakers from employment centre	20%	6
No resources used	20%	6
LINC resources including activities	17%	5
Created own materials and resources	13%	4
CLB resources including benchmarks	10%	3
Course material – none specified or teacher created	10%	3
Other ESL resources – books and websites like Tutela	7%	2
Pragmatics	7%	2
Minimal resources used	3%	1
Resources relevant to individual	3%	1

### Have you heard of the resource *Relating CLB to Essential Skills: A Comparative Framework*?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		60%	115
No		40%	76
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>191</b>



## What resources do you use to teach Essential Skills to EAL/ESL learners?

61 individuals responded, including 13 who provided multiple responses.






Note: Percentage does not calculate to 100 due to multiple responses.

Responses	Percentages	Number of similar responses
Internet resources	28%	17
Specific resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centre for Intercultural Education</li> <li>• Douglas College</li> <li>• Essential Skills Indicator</li> <li>• Ireland's National Adult Literacy Association</li> <li>• Language for Work</li> <li>• Ontario Skills Passport</li> <li>• Realia</li> <li>• SCORMS</li> <li>• The employment and employability skills 2000 framework</li> <li>• Tutela</li> <li>• Ventures</li> <li>• Workplace Forms</li> <li>• Workwrite Series</li> </ul>	25%	15
Created own materials and resources	18%	11
Textbooks, books	13%	8
LINC resources	11%	7
Others including Authentic materials, commercial, games, grammar, language power B	10%	6
CLB resources	8%	5
Handouts and course materials	8%	5
No resources used	8%	5
Many resources used (general) – none specified	5%	3
ESL Library	2%	1

## Have you ever used the document *Relating CLB to Essential Skills: A Comparative Framework*?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		55%	48
No		45%	39
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>87</b>

**On average, how often do you use it?**








Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Weekly		9%	4
Monthly		2%	1
Once a term		6%	3
Once a year		0%	0
Occasionally as needed		77%	36
Other: Project related, theme based		6%	3
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>47</b>

**What specifically do you use it for?**

Responses	Percentage	Number of similar responses
Curriculum Development	27%	11
Information and reference including sharing information with others	24%	10
Relation to CLB, LBS or ES	20%	8
Instructor Training	10%	4
Relation to Employment or real-world	10%	4
Projects or specific classes	7%	3
Writing Skills	2%	1

**Why don't you use it? (check all that apply)**

Note: Percentage does not calculate to 100 due to multiple responses.

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Other:		38%	14
Doesn't meet my needs		27%	10
Not relevant		22%	8
Don't know how to use it		11%	4
Cannot find it online when I need it		11%	4
Not helpful		8%	3
Uses old CLB		3%	1
Don't agree with the alignment		0%	0











Responses for **Other (please specify)**:

Responses	Percentage	Number of similar responses
No time to use it	43%	6
Did not know about it	14%	2
Have designated resources	14%	2
Not suitable for students needs	14%	2
Not an instructor	7%	1
Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referral of students with workplace essential skills needs to regional provincially funded workplace essential skills centre for ESL training</li> </ul>	7%	1

**What do you like about *Relating CLB to Essential Skills: A Comparative Framework?* (check all that apply)**

Note: Percentage does not calculate to 100 due to multiple responses.

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Practical		45%	40
Only resource that I am aware of		38%	33
Well written and clear		31%	27
Agree with the theoretical framework		26%	23
Comprehensive		24%	21
Easy to find what I need		23%	20
Feel the alignment is accurate		23%	20
Other:		14%	12
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>88</b>

Responses for **Other (please specify)**:

Responses	Percentage	Number of similar responses
Not used often	30%	3
Did not like it or agree with it	20%	2
Not familiar with it	20%	2
Don't use it	10%	1
Helps with staff and clients	10%	1
Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thought PBLA approach replaced essential skills approach for module planning</li> </ul>	10%	1








**What would you change to improve the usefulness of this document?**

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Provide links to material that show how Essential Skills can be used in an EAL/ESL class		22%	20
Provide concrete examples of how the information can be used		19%	17
Update the alignment to the revised CLB		18%	16
Other:		16%	15
Redo the alignment to show how essential skills align at low levels		14%	13
Clearer/more user friendly presentation		4%	4
Add: More sample tasks and language components, update alignment to revised CLB and show how skills align at lower levels, all the above		3%	3
Expand on: More actual lesson and teaching materials. It's difficult for instructors, particularly new ones, to work with only a framework; concrete examples of how the information can be used.		2%	2
Remove: Old photos, guys looking at slides		1%	1
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>91</b>










Responses for **Other (please specify):**

Responses	Percentage	Number of similar responses
All the above	50%	7
Not Sure	29%	4
Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is too much information on a page</li> <li>The document is based on assumptions that do not align with practical experience and need similarly to the CLC 2012 document</li> <li>Many essential skills indicators relate to other skills such as reading and writing and would like to see the expansion of the comparative framework to include thinking, numeracy and digital technology</li> </ul>	14%	2
Unrelated comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would like to have selected multiple responses for this question</li> </ul>	7%	1



**At what Canadian Language Benchmark level do you think Essential Skills can and should be incorporated into classroom learning?**

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Pre-benchmark		20%	31
CLB 1		17%	27
CLB 2		10%	15
CLB 3		19%	29
CLB 4		19%	29
CLB 5		12%	18
CLB 6		4%	6
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>155</b>

**Which Essential Skills would be suitable for your type of programming? (check all that apply)**

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Reading		88%	137
Oral Communication		88%	136
Writing		87%	135
Working with Others		84%	130
Document Use		78%	121
Computer Use		74%	115
Thinking		72%	111
Numeracy		65%	100
Continuous Learning		59%	91
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>155</b>

**Should Essential Skills be incorporated into literacy classes?**










Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		75%	113
No		25%	38
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>151</b>

### At what level should they be included?

117 individuals responded with 115 providing one response and 2 providing multiple responses. Note: Percentage does not calculate to 100 due to multiple responses.

Responses	Percentage	Count
Level 1	12%	14
All levels	10%	12
Level 2	9%	10
Level 3	9%	10
Level 4	9%	10
Level 5	9%	10
Beginner	5%	6
Earliest Level	5%	6
Pre-benchmark	5%	6
Unsure/unclear	4%	5
Already incorporated	3%	3
Levels 1-2	3%	3
Any level	2%	2
Foundations	2%	2
Level 1 and higher	2%	2
Levels 2-3	2%	2
Levels 3-4	2%	2
Phase 1	2%	2
As needed	1%	1
Level 2 and higher	1%	1
Level 3 and higher	1%	1
Levels 4-5	1%	1
Levels 4-6	1%	1
Level 5 or 6	1%	1
Literacy	1%	1
N/A	1%	1
Phase 3	1%	1
Upper literacy level	1%	1
Varies	1%	1
Comments: The skills are needed but question using two frameworks as CLB should be enough	1%	1

**Which Essential Skills would be suitable for inclusion in a Literacy class (check all that apply)?**

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Numeracy		80%	107
Reading		69%	92
Oral Communication		69%	92
Working with Others		67%	89
Computer Use		60%	80
Document Use		59%	79
Writing		59%	79
Thinking		51%	68
Continuous Learning		35%	46
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>133</b>

**What other resources do you use when developing material or lesson plans for the teaching of Essential Skills in an EAL/ESL context? For what purpose?**

85 individuals responded with 68 providing one response and 17 providing multiple responses. Note: Percentage does not calculate to 100 due to multiple responses.

Responses	Percentage	Number of similar responses
Internet resources used such as online activities and government websites	38%	32
Real life materials and experience such as newspapers and documents, field trips	28%	24
CLB/ES resources	14%	12
No resources used	11%	9
Other ESL resources – books and websites like Tutela	11%	9
Created own resources	6%	5
Textbooks, books	6%	5
Resources provided	5%	4
LINC resources	4%	3
Unsure	4%	3
Literacy	2%	2
Many resources used – none specific	2%	2
Videos, games	2%	2
Comments: • Complexity is the key	1%	1

**Do you have any other suggestions for the revision and reissuance of this document?**

60 individuals responded with 57 providing one response and 3 providing multiple responses.  
 Note: Percentage does not calculate to 100 due to multiple responses.

Responses	Percentage	Number of similar responses
No suggestions	33%	20
More examples especially practical examples	27%	16
Better alignment with benchmarks	8%	5
More user friendly - too complicated for learners	7%	4
Accessibility of document (e.g. online)	5%	3
Consult with instructors and experts	3%	2
Clarity on usage of document	3%	2
Design activity books	3%	2
Include lesson plans (e.g. tasks)	3%	2
Not sure	3%	2
Unfamiliar with document	3%	2
Engagement with LINC program	2%	1
Instructor training	2%	1
Update content (e.g. photos and inclusion of intercultural awareness)	2%	1
Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible incorrect reference in book</li> </ul>	2%	1