![Community Adult Learning Program logo]

Skills for Learning Panel - Discussion Summary

CLN hosted a guest panel on September 12, 2024 to explore how CALP-funded organizations are currently using 'Skills for Learning' instruction to support adult learning.

The CALP Policy Manual describes Skills for Learning as "learning opportunities that support the development of the fundamental skills and habits of learning that support foundational learners to:
- build confidence
- develop an identity as a learner
- advocate for themselves
- engage in foundational and other learning opportunities."

CALP Policy Manual (p. 27-28)

The guest panelists included:
- Monique Sedlar, Rocky Community Learning Council
- Odette Lloyd, NorQuest Community Adult Learning - Whitecourt - Lac Ste. Anne
- Monica Sczyrba-Davis, Pincher Creek Community Adult Learning Council Society

Panelists shared strategies, resources and insights they've learned through teaching the Skills for Learning.

Notes from the Panel Discussion

What made you first take notice of Skills for Learning (S4L) and prompt you to create programming with it? How did you determine that it was needed?

Noticing that a significant portion of staff time was dedicated to enhancing self-esteem, balancing life and academic responsibilities, and aligning personal goals with appropriate pathways before transitioning to more structured learning.

Had clients referred through other agencies who had so many doors closed to them. For many we were the last possible door they could knock on.

One way to determine the need in the community is by talking about the program, usually with agencies we partner with, like-minded leaders in the community or clients in other programs. This has been a challenge post-COVID because community agency channels are broken.

NorQuest's Skills for Learning curriculum provides facilitators with a foundational framework. It complements the needs of learners and is versatile enough to be applied across all programs. Panelists who use this curriculum, used it with:
- financial literacy courses, for example, decision-making when choosing a bank, assets when building self-esteem, etc.
- where formal assessments are not conducted, for example in partnership with a women's shelter program, transitional housing program,
- as part of the pre-GED/CAEC program to support the learning to learn skills
- tutor programs

How closely does your current S4L instruction look compared to when you started?

We started with the NorQuest Skills for Learning modules and offered a stand-alone program. Did not get a lot of interest from learners. After a year, the program was changed:

- started embedding S4L into other programs, for example in partnered programs such as Mental Health & Addictions, transitional housing project, employment agency, but also in tutoring programs and supporting transitions to college and post-secondary programs.
- Started using the UpSkills workbooks from ABC Life Literacy.
- Tutors are trained with the modules and encouraged to use them in response to learning needs as they arise. We are finding it works better to pull a module to teach to a challenge the learner is facing.
- Each lesson has a S4L component. Tutors chunk the modules into shorter segments to build the Skills for Learning, gradually over time.

We run Skills for Learning courses focused on a specific skill (eg. Change Management, Goal Setting). We also embed the S4L in other programs. We tailor our approach to the specific needs of our learners.

- For example, in a women's shelter program, for one learner the idea of setting goals was overwhelming. The facilitator adapted the activity and instead of using the goal-setting workbook, she engaged the group in collectively thinking of "one-minute daily tasks" such as setting reminders for medication, writing daily affirmations to post on a mirror, etc. The learning was focused on small steps to build confidence in learning. The group reflected on their effectiveness through the week at the next session. This approach enabled the learner to build confidence and, by the end of the 14-week program, she was able to set and articulate small, achievable goals. As well as a long-term goal.

The roots of our program are still there but have evolved tremendously.

- What started as 4 workshops is now 24-34 workshops with a team of facilitators that includes two teachers, one Blackfoot Elder, a mindset coach and a team lead/facilitator.
- We also partner with our neighboring CALP in Willow creek and share funding, expertise and space as well as clients
- The additional courses that were created were designed to overcome the barriers we saw to moving forward towards fulfillment, employment, greater learning, including Growth Mindset, Limiting Beliefs, Identity, Confidence, Boundaries, Learning Styles, Trauma & Learning, Employment Journey, Goal Setting, Vision Board, Problem Solving, Executive Functioning Skills, Interview Skills and more
- The curriculum was developed in-house but includes some of the resources from NorQuest's Skills for Learning and ABC Life Literacy's UpSkills programs.
- Offered online and in person, simultaneously in two locations using the Meeting Owl devices, twice a week, 2 hours each. We are available for tutoring/mentorship after class on whatever comes up.

Can you explain how you go about designing learning for the learners in your program to teach S4L? Is it a course, tutoring, family literacy program. Is it embedded in other programs?

- We meet our learners first, we do a lot of observing, listening during intake and that first class.
- Meet learners one-on-one and begin by building relationship and trust
- We offer suggestions about what we offer. Sometimes we do a one-off class for just 1 or 2 students. The program we created is 24 classes online/in-person followed by tutoring, internal and external referrals to Columbia College, Training Inc, Red Crow College. It is an individual path for each student.

- We take it a week at a time, picking up on themes from the weekly discussions then bring in learning on these themes in the upcoming sessions. We ask learners what they want to learn.
- We teach individual skills for learning as a course or tutor session…it makes it easier to report on. I do find the learners really enjoy these courses. "Self-development", (you can be creative with the name) is very popular at the moment. It is not hard to convince learners of the importance of these skills. It is easy to make the material fun and relevant to learners' needs.
- We try to make the connections to everyday life clear. For example, the Change workshop can be added to a resume. Change is a key skill employers are looking in application forms.
- We prep facilitators to respond to S4L prompts and challenges. They are made familiar with the modules and supported in adapting them to the specific needs of the learner(s) Facilitators are coached to point out to learners when the apply the skills they've learned and celebrate it.
- We embed a Skills for Learning piece into each session. For example, time management & goal setting tidbits work well to complement a math skills program. These skills and strategies are built on over the duration of the program.
- S4L seamlessly integrates into all facets of our programming. For instance, when learners are preparing for their driving exams, I incorporate study strategies into our sessions, sharing techniques such as using flashcards and setting timers to enhance study effectiveness.

What have you learned about teaching Skills for Learning? What advice would you give to other CALPs who are interested in supporting foundational learners with these soft skills?

- I recommend starting with the NorQuest curriculum as a foundational base and then customizing it to suit your learner's specific needs. I greatly appreciate how these modules can be tailored to meet the diverse educational needs of learners.
- Be mindful of individual learner pathways and challenges. Design around each learner.
- S4L has proven beneficial across various learner profiles and programs.
- My advice to other CALPs:
    - Boundaries – support setting boundaries with staff
    - Grow amazing Read the Room Skills, always be hosting with the intention of welcoming what comes up. Don't want anyone to feel shame for what they share.
    - Self-Care – take good care of yourself when doing this work
    - Team – build a team to support this work
    - Hire expertise where needed – find extra funding or partner with local agencies
    - Provide options not solutions – the goal is to empower not enable
    - Set intention
    - Be authentic
    - Lean on your "friends". You have CALP colleagues and local agencies who have the expertise to guide you where you don't.
- As a facilitator work through the learning yourself. Make it your own so you have your own understanding of your own growth to share with learners. Maybe, start with setting boundaries!
- Use the modules as team building
- Skills for learning is a culture you create within your workplace and within your mindset, how are you consistently creating opportunity for skills to learn that apply to the lives of the students in your spaces

What impact have you seen in the learners who receive S4L instruction?

Which S4L outcomes in the CALP Policy Manual do you see: build confidence, develop an identity as a learner, advocate for themselves, engage in foundational and other learning opportunities?

- Definitely an increase in learner confidence! It empowers learners to advocate for themselves.
  For instance, in our banking curriculum, learners schedule an appointment to discuss banking questions with their financial institutions. One learner shared that without the weeks of meetings and confidence-building activities, she wouldn't have felt able to make that call or arrange the appointment. She was so proud of herself for making the call!
- Success is so unique to each individual, sometimes it looks like eye contact, moving, independence through transportation and personal choices, sometimes it's a pause, sometimes it's tending to other pieces that have come to light in their lives.
- Improved learner identity is a big change that is observable
- Learning these skills immediately enhances learners' lives
  An 87-year-old learner from the Seniors Lodge reached out to improve her communication skills after receiving negative feedback from her dinner table partners. Working alongside her was a truly enriching experience, and she reported back that although her dinner partners have changed, there have been no complaints from her new table partners.

Questions from the Room

How do you report Skills for Learning in your CALP annual report?

My primary focus is not on including these skills in the report, although we do, but rather on the value and adaptability of these modules. S4L courses are reported as a course. We will use the new narrative sections of the report to share how we embed S4L into our programs and the impact it has.

How do you market Skills for Learning?

- Incorporating the term "readiness" to our program name. For example, GED Readiness Program, High School Readiness, Trades Readiness. Then list the skills for learning in the program description.
- The program is shared with community agencies and the Indigenous liaison builds relationships with people in the surrounding Blackfoot communities. It can take years of building relationships for someone to walk through our door.
- We connect it to other learner goals such as Employment Workshops (e.g. Change Management, Goal Setting Career Planning)

COMMUNITY ADULT
LEARNING PROGRAM

Skills for Learning Panel Resources
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Skills for Learning Instructional Materials Used by Panelists

1. Skills for Learning Modules (Norquest College)
    https://calp.ca/resources/skills-for-learning-resources.htm

    The Skills for Learning Learner & Facilitator materials are divided into 10 modules and each module contains:
    - Learner module - can be printed as is for your learner or pull just the activities you wish to use
    - Facilitator module - a duplicate of the learner module with additional teaching resources and information
    - PowerPoint Slides - pictures and examples from the learner modules that will help you support your students in a virtual/online setting (or in person!)

    The topics covered in the modules are: Building Confidence and Self Esteem, Communication, Time Management, Study Skills, Goal Setting, Personal Change, Conflict, Problem Solving, Finding a Healthy Life Balance, Relationships and Personal Boundaries

    These resources have been developed by CALP staff for CALP learners. They are intended to be adapted and modified to suit the needs of individual learners.

2. Up Skills for Work (ABC Life Literacy)
    https://upskillsforwork.ca/

    1. **Up Skills for Work**
    2. **Up Skills for Work – Get Started** is adapted for learners reading at a grade 2-4 level

    UP Skills for Work helps learners develop key employability and life skills through free workshops and downloadable workbooks.

    The Up Skills for Work resources include
    - free downloadable workbooks and video lessons for learners
    - facilitator guides
    - online training for facilitators

    Some topics include: Motivation, Attitude, Accountability, Presentation, Time Management, Adaptability, Stress Management, and Confidence.

Additional Instructional Resources

1. Taking Charge (CanLearn Society)
    https://calp.ca/resources/taking-charge-program-facilitators-guide.htm

    The Taking Charge program is designed for foundational adult learners to develop self-determination attitudes, knowledge and skills while using and building their basic literacy skills. Self-determination means believing that you can have an impact on life's events rather than life's events having control over your life.

    Taking Charge invites adult foundational learners on a learning journey that includes four main goals:

    1. Increase the foundational learners' confidence in themselves and their abilities.
    2. Help them build positive learning identities.
    3. Talk, read, write and learn together.
    4. Promote a greater sense of aspiration for the future in adult foundational learners.

    The list of topics are co-produced with program participants and based on what is important to them, but it also reflects key research in the area of self-determination and adult learning.

2. Stronger (carya)
    https://calp.ca/resources/stronger-toolkit-skills-for-learning-toolkit-from-carya.htm

    The Stronger toolkit invites the exploration of a variety of jumping off points that are designed to support learners to build these skills for learning.

    The toolkit provides ready to use, PICK & PULL sessions that can help you support participants on their journey of self-discovery and learning. You are invited to browse through the BIG IDEAS and PICK a topic that will be of interest to participants – the toolkit is flexible, adaptable and customizable. The Stronger Toolkit is divided into four main sections:

    - Taking Care of Our Time
    - Taking Care of Our Minds
    - Taking Care of Our Emotions
    - Taking Care of Our Relationships

3. Learning to Learn Series (University of Arizona)
    https://calp.ca/resources/learning-to-learn-series.htm
    The Learning to Learn Series is an interactive resource of evidence-based practices and strategies for adults returning to learning. The series focuses on the skills or practices adults need to be successful in learning. Each of the practices includes:
    - a description of the strategy or practice
    - explanation of how it helps in learning, based in research
    - videos
    - a strategy toolkit for instructors to incorporate the practices in the classroom (designed for post-secondary but definitely adaptable for foundational learning)