

## Education Roundtable Minutes

**Date:** November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011

**Time:** 10:00am to 12:00 pm

**Attendees:** Darlene Higgins (Medix School), Jason Campbell (Medix School), Angela Jacewicz (Seneca College), Tony Bertin (Centennial College), Hanna Cabaj (TCDSB), Karen Evans (TDSB), Grainne O'Donnell (TDSB), Zoe Zhu (Seneca College), Georgina dos Santos (Seneca College), Hanifa Kassam (ACSA), Michelle Dagnino (Consultant), Michelle Davis (NWS LIP)

Introduction/Review of agenda by Michelle Dagnino

- Purpose of the meeting
- Background of the NWS LIP
- Access to employment and skills and training needed to be provided by the education sector
- Bring some of the outcomes back to your organization
- Brief introductions from participants (see "Attendees")

Presentation by Michelle Davis regarding the work of the LIP

- 3 Major Objectives of the NWS LIP
- Strategies and activities from the NWS LIP implementation plan that directly relate to education sector (see PowerPoint slides)

### Introductory Comments

- Currently there is a gap in how prepared or ready newcomers are for the Canadian workforce expressed by employers
- The main objective of this meeting is to get a general understanding of how each participating organization is preparing newcomers to be job ready

### What is each organization currently doing?

#### TDSB

- TDSB offers ELT, LINC, ESL, specialized and enhanced language training, Adult Learning, full-time or part-time classes, 5 days a week
- LINC program attendees are assessed by the YMCA and referred to LINC or other appropriate language classes
- They also offer TOFEL language assessment for college or university readiness
- Bench marks of classes range from Literacy to level 7 (everyday language skills to business)

#### TCDSB

- TCDSB offers many of the same language programs but in addition Citizenship classes, Literacy bench mark 1-8 classes and pre-bench mark
- Language training is available to all newcomers and citizens free of charge

- Visitors can attend classes, however will need to pay a fee
- Students range from very low literacy students that only need everyday English skills, to internationally trained professionals that have higher level English skills
- Trends of newcomer demographics change on a regular basis as do their learning needs

Seneca College OSLT can only take landed immigrants and permanent residents

- They offer language classes for the workplace, which are very work specific, and developed by specialists
- OSLT programs are only taught in colleges, usually a 4 mos., 180 hrs (a 20 hr. online component is included). Classes are conducted evenings and on Saturdays, free of charge
- Applicants should have related work experience, CBL level 6 or higher. If any applicant does not meet the required language score, will be referred back to LINC or ESL
- Also Seneca Work Force Skills program, offered in 3 locations that serve all unemployed or under-employed
- Helps in developing skills to access the labour market, provides apprenticeships, and works with employers to support employees on the job after employment

York Gate Seneca

- Academic upgrading for WSIB or second career
- Their Youthlink program is offered to non-refugee's
- Also offer pre-apprenticeships
- College Opportunities Program for college bound students to upgrade their communications or skills in the science's
- Business Office skills is a tuition based certificate program also offered through Seneca York Gate

Medix School

- Training for the health care sector
- Pre-requisites include, mature students – Wonderlic tool is used to test potential students
- Those that do not pass will be directed on how to acquire the needed skill level to attend Medix School
- Basic grade 11 to attend the school, no specific bench mark, however some courses require a higher level understanding of the English language – program specific\*
- Classes help to build job skills, provide job support and allows one to upgrade and attain additional skills
- Works with other institutes to help students and potential students to be successful in their studies and career
- Most of their students are from a visible minority group
- Usually underemployed from the medical field and internationally trained
- Offer a wide range of medical field courses and programs that are all accredited
- 100% of their students obtain placements
- Provides financial assistance

Centennial College Outreach

- Connections with underrepresented communities
- Participants worked on the following questions during collective brainstorming:
  - a. What are the key issues for newcomers in finding employment / education?

- b. Small group work – What are our institutions doing to address these issues?
- c. What do we need to be doing better?
- d. Where do we go from here?

## Feedback from the Open Discussion

- **What are some of the challenges your organizations are seeing?**
  - Pathways (learner pathway) for clients are not concrete
    - How can we better understand this to make the necessary connections for our clients to move them to successful employment
  - CLARS – limitations on what is assessed however will offer options/pathways. As CLARS is still in the pilot phase, when it is instituted newcomers will go there for language assessment and then be referred to places they can go to get the language course they need. Possibly they will have access to all the publically funded courses (SLTs, ELTs, LINC, ESL, etc.), but the full scope has not been fully determined
  - Entrance tests are a requirement – World Education Services (their assessment is **not free**. The course by course assessment is more expensive than the degree/diploma assessment) provides newcomers with this service
  - Supporting clients beyond ‘first point of contact’ is a challenge
  - Currently there is no summary of services to refer to – it is up to each Service Provider Organization to know what is available
  - There should be consistency in knowledge sharing amongst ‘education’ and ‘training’ organizations
  - Language Assessment – there is limited knowledge among the educational institutions around what CLB levels required for various professions
  - How language impacts the non-technical needs of employment in Canada?
  - Accent, pronunciation and employer perception are MAJOR Canadian economy challenges
  - Example: TCDSB – employer challenges – the ‘Canadian Context’ is a challenge
  - There are limited to no training on ‘Canadian Context/bridging’ for professions which are required beyond the technical skills needed to be hired by an employer
  - Different education and language providers have varying capacities based on their expertise to advise clients on what they should take to meet their goals/employment
  - Newcomers go through any door that they identify with, however they may need guidance to choose their pathway
  - Relying on tech or print limits the necessary but very important value of personal connections – providing human service
- Is language and employment something that should be dealt with separately?
  - Ministry of Education – discussion paper on the fragmentation of services
  - Pilot projects in Waterloo have been introduced on how to better coordinate

- Additional Comments
  - MTCU – programming will be required to follow-up on services provided but also services received from outside to complete their pathway
  - Ministries which deal with education are discussing how to better work together (funnel)
  - Global Experience Ontario – ITP/trades
  - Resources – access to professions and trades – LOOK INTO – settlement.org connection
  - Challenges are very similar as youth and women’s issues
    - The key contact method has seen to be very useful
  
- Employers
  - There are resources for employers at the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks around language
  - Where does EO fall within all this?
  
- What can we do?
  - Begin to unpack pathways – language vs. training
    - What do languages pathways look like and for whom
    - There is a recognition that the pieces are there however they’re limitedly connected
    - Creating a mutual context
  - Fairs – schools have a captive audience
    - Showcasing the context and then following up with a space to showcase the services available to support the context
  - Is there an opportunity around building the capacity of frontline staff to be better informed about the services available in the community
  - Fairs for service providers
  - Sector specific
  
- Wrap Up
  - Participants were thanked by Michelle Dagnino and will be contacted for follow-up