

# Essential Skills For The Changing Workplace Seminar

Marion Bruce

Centre for Education & Training

Tuesday, May 26, 2009

# Mission

Engage employers in Ontario through seminars and consulting to increase their understanding of Essential Skills and to facilitate the use of Essential Skills tools to:

- Develop workforce Essential Skills
- Raise health and safety standards
- Enhance recruiting practices
- Improve workforce productivity



# Centre for Education and Training

- In operation since 1989
- Not-for-profit subsidiary of Peel District School Board
- Employs 300 full-time staff and over 500 part time/contract staff
- Offers local and international programs and services
  - language training
  - settlement services
  - career and employment services
  - diploma and certificate programs



# Partners

Peel-Halton-Dufferin Adult Learning Network  
(PHDALN)

College of Ontario Network for Education and  
Training (CON\*NECT)



## Workshop Objectives

- Describe Human Resources and Social Development Canada's (HRSDC) Essential Skills project
- Identify 9 Essential Skills common to all workplaces and occupations
- Describe Essential Skills profiles
- Introduce Essential Skills tools
- Review benefits gained from implementing Essential Skills framework
- Show how we can help organizations introduce Essential Skills in the workplace



# Essential Skills Project Background

- Essential Skills Project launched in 1994
- Interviews conducted with over 4,500 workers to validate how Essentials Skills were used to complete daily tasks
- Key project objective - to provide a framework for improving the Essential Skills of Canadians entering or in the labour market

# What Are Essential Skills?

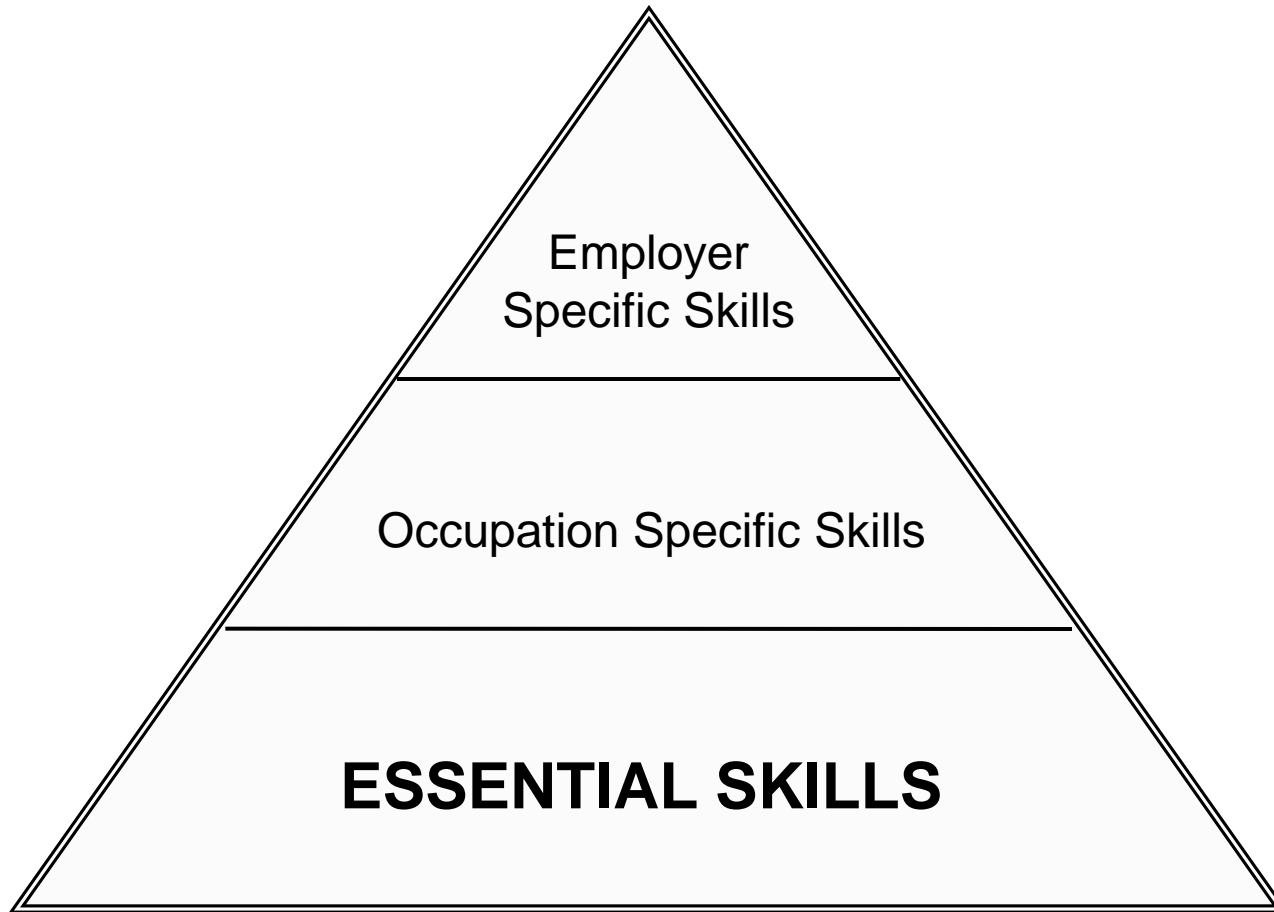
- Reading Text
  - Document Use
  - Numeracy
  - Writing
  - **Thinking Skills**
  - Computer Use
  - Oral Communications
  - Working with Others
  - Continuous Learning
- Critical Thinking
  - Problem Solving
  - Decision Making
  - Job Task Planning and Organizing
  - Significant Use of Memory
  - Finding Information



# Why Are Essential Skills Important?

- Foundation skills that make it possible to learn occupation-specific skills
- Enabling and transferable skills used in:
  - Learning
  - Workplace
  - Life
- Impact the performance of most workplace tasks
- Increase people's ability to adapt to change and keep a job

# Where Do Essential Skills Fit With Job Specific Skills?



# How Do Essential Skills Impact The Workplace?

- Financial performance and productivity rely on skilled people
- Shrinking labour force – a declining birth rate and an ageing workforce are creating greater competition for skilled people
- Increasing competition – the ability of Canadian organizations to win in a competitive global marketplace depends on an adequate supply of highly skilled people
- Rising skill requirements
- Nationally about 42% of Canadians have literacy scores below level 3

# Essential Skills Framework



# Essential Skills Profiles

- Describe how each Essential Skill is used by workers in an occupation group
- Over 250 profiles posted on the HRSDC Essential Skills website
- Each Profile Includes:
  - occupation description
  - most important ES
  - task examples
  - future trends
  - physical aspects
  - complexity levels



# What Are Complexity Levels?

- A rating tool for measuring skills
- Address differences in skill requirements between occupations
- Complexity level 1 (basic tasks) to complexity level 4 or 5 (advanced tasks)

# Complexity Levels - Numeracy

## Level 1

- **Cashiers** handle cash, credit card and debit transactions and provide change

## Level 2

- **Executive Assistants** calculate travel claims using specific per diem and kilometer rates; compare expenditures to budget allocations to ensure they are within budgets

# Complexity Levels - Numeracy

## Level 3

- **Human Resource Professionals** calculate the cost of compensation and benefit options to determine affordability

## Level 4

- **Loan Officers** calculate capital amounts, interest charges, payments and outstanding amounts for mortgages and loans; mortgage specialists calculate total amount of interest clients can save by discharging current mortgages and getting new mortgages at lower interest rates

# Complexity Levels - Numeracy

## Level 5

- **Architectural Technicians** use geometry and trigonometry to calculate the angles of intersections and lengths of existing structural elements such as walls and ceilings



# Essential Skills and Safety Performance

“A low level of literacy can jeopardize workers’ safety if they cannot understand the health and safety regulations provided to them. Furthermore, low literacy skills can prevent workers from obtaining information about their rights to a safe workplace. Without an understanding of their rights or the ability to assert them, workers with low literacy skills will continue to operate in unsafe work environments.”

***All Signs Point to Yes – Literacy’s Impact on Workplace Health and Safety, The Conference Board of Canada, 2008***



# Health and Safety Competencies

1. Follows health and safety rules/procedures
2. Prevents health or safety violations
3. Manages unsafe or hazardous incidents

# Health and Safety Competencies

## **Follows health and safety rules/procedures**

- Demonstrates** positive attitude toward safety
- Wears** required protective attire
- Locates** emergency exit plan and fire exits
- Maintains** a clean and safe work environment
- Explains** safety signs and symbols
- Explains** safety procedures and guidelines
- Participates** in programs to improve health and safety



# Health and Safety Competencies

## **Prevents health or safety violations**

- Stores** materials properly
- Practices** proper waste disposal
- Recognizes** common physical, chemical and biological hazards
- Complies** with established safety practices
- Obtains** proper material handling information

# Health and Safety Competencies

## **Manages unsafe or hazardous incidents**

- Reports** unsafe practices to appropriate personnel
- Implements** corrective actions when environment is unsafe/unhealthy
- Performs** first aid skills when needed
- Maintains** materials safety data sheets (MSDS)



# Essential Skills Toolkit

## Assessment Tools for the Workplace

- Organization Needs Assessment
- Workplace Survey
- Workplace Check-up
- Hiring Checklist

## Assessment Tools for the Individual

- Reading Indicator
- Document Use Indicator
- Numeracy Indicator
- On-line Indicator
  - Document Use – Levels 1 -3
  - Numeracy, Levels 1 - 3



# Test OF Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES)

- TOWES assesses 3 workplace Essential Skills
  - reading text
  - document use
  - numeracy
- Test versions
  - Gen 1: Levels 1 and 2
  - Gen 2: Levels 2 and 3
  - Gen 3: Levels 3 and 4
  - Sectors: Office and Administration and Manufacturing
- Pencil and paper test
- Test taker placed in the role of a worker who must process information to complete workplace specific tasks



# Essential Skills Toolkit

## Learning Tools

- Tip Sheets
  - Oral Communication
  - Document Use
  - Computer Use
- Problem Solving Guide
- Passport
- Portfolio



# Essential Skills Toolkit

## Training Support

- Taking Action: An Introduction
- Taking Action: A Guide



# Essential Skills In The Workplace

1. Elmira Truck Services Limited – Maintenance and Safety Inspections
2. National Silicates – Chemical Company

# Elmira Truck Services Challenges

- Employ 9 people – 4 licensed mechanics, 3 apprentices and 2 managers
- Provide all aspects of truck and trailer maintenance, government safety inspections and emissions testing
- Need for highly skilled truck and coach mechanics because of growth in transportation industry
- Regulations, standards and changes in operational systems require constant on-the-job learning



# Elmira Truck Services Solution

- Participated Conestoga College project – Integration of Essential Skills into Workplace HR Practices
- Used the Essential Skills profiles to determine the complexity level of tasks performed each day
- Most important Essential Skills identified as:
  - Reading Text (3)
  - Document Use (3)
  - Numeracy (3)
- TOWES used as assessment tool – results indicated Document Use Skills needed enhancement
- Implemented self-study Document Use training program using materials provided by Conestoga College

# National Silicates Challenges

- 93 employees across Canada
- Significant machine downtime
- Skill gaps were more apparent with the introduction of technology
- Ability of employees became a “make” or “break” factor in business success

# National Silicates ES Solution

- With 4 other companies developed Chemical Process Operator Program (CPO)
  - To upgrade skill level of existing plant operators
  - To develop a workforce for the future, capable of responding to technology changes and legislation
- The CPO program is an approved apprenticeship program recognized by the Province of Ontario
- Basic numeracy and language skills offered by the local school board are prerequisites for the CPO program

# Economic Benefits

A diagram consisting of a rounded rectangular box on the left containing the word 'DIRECT' in bold, black, uppercase letters. A large, black, curly bracket extends from the right side of the box to the left side of a list of nine bullet points. The list items are: 'Increased quality of work', 'Increased output of products and services', 'Reduced time per task', 'Reduced error rate', 'Reduced wastage in production of products and services', 'Better health and safety records', 'Increased customer retention', and 'Increased profitability'.

**DIRECT**

- Increased quality of work
- Increased output of products and services
- Reduced time per task
- Reduced error rate
- Reduced wastage in production of products and services
- Better health and safety records
- Increased customer retention
- Increased profitability

***Source: Dr. Michael R. Bloom, The Conference Board of Canada***

# Economic Benefits

**INDIRECT**

- Improved capacity to solve problems
- Improved capacity to cope with workplace change
- Increased capacity to use new technology in the workplace
- Increased capacity to handle on-the-job training
- Improved employee morale/self-esteem
- Better team performance
- Reduced absenteeism
- Increased employee retention

***Source: Dr. Michael R. Bloom, The Conference Board of Canada***

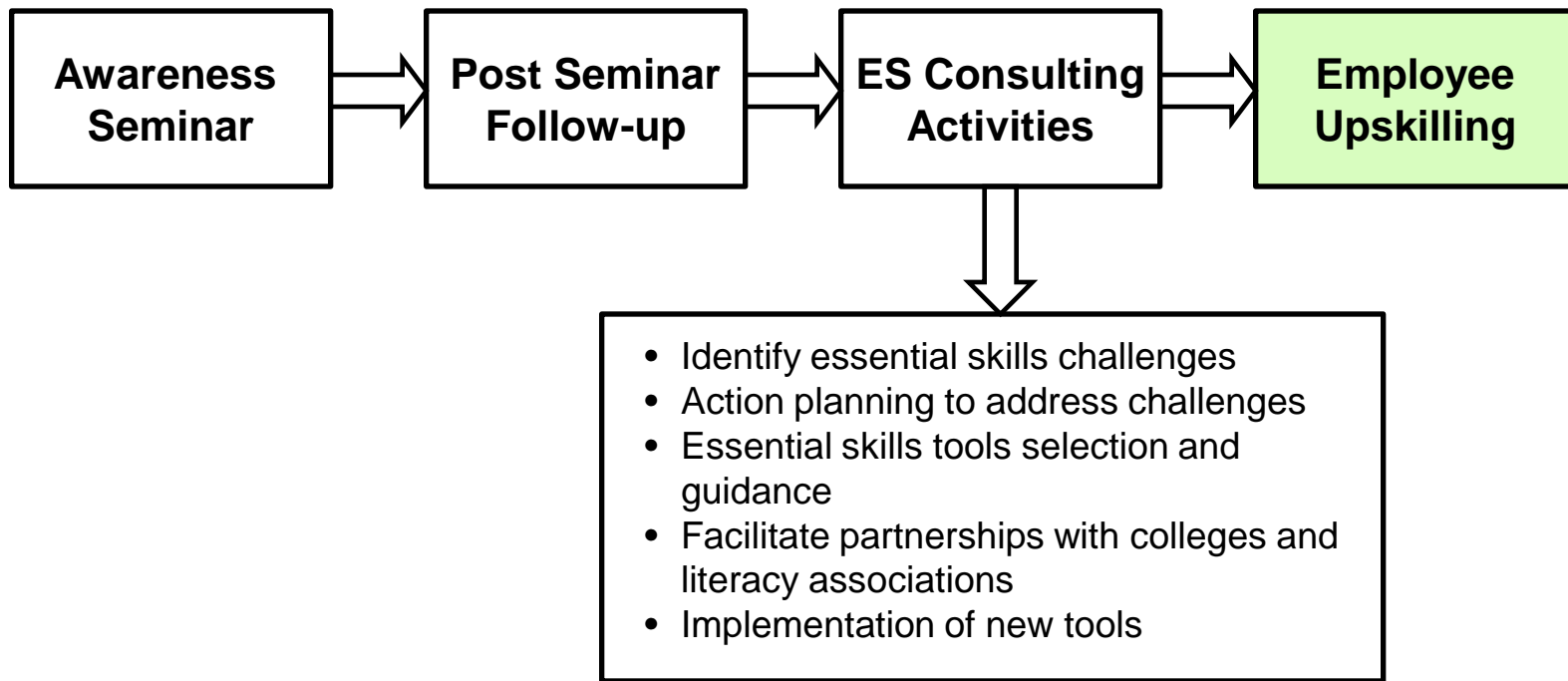


# Implementation – How We Can Help

## Information Guide

- Links to on-line resources
- Links to community resources

# Implementation Services



## In Closing...

Most employees in the changing workplace must be able to:

- Understand and use written and online information
- Fill out forms and complete reports
- Use numbers accurately – money math, measuring, converting measurements to metric, developing budgets
- Operate equipment
- Use computers
- Think logically to solve workplace problems
- Communicate with fellow team members and customers
- Demonstrate willingness and ability to learn for life

Are YOUR  
Employees Ready?



# Contact Us

Telephone: (905) 949-0049

To Book a Seminar – Marion Bruce, ext. 4101

To Book a Consultation – Glenn Gowriluk, ext. 4102

Additional Information – Vivian Miragias, ext. 2051



## Workshop Objectives

- Describe Human Resources and Social Development Canada's (HRSDC) Essential Skills project
- Identify 9 Essential Skills common to all workplaces and occupations
- Describe Essential Skills profiles
- Introduce Essential Skills tools
- Review benefits gained from implementing Essential Skills framework
- Show how we can help organizations introduce Essential Skills in the workplace