Summary of Findings

MORE WALLS THAN DOORS
By Norman S. Rowen

What We've Learned About Learner Transitions

(A) How Learners Come To Be In Different Programs

> (1) Many learners come to be in literacy programs as a result of the assessment and referral processes of other programs and sponsors, but it is very uneven.

> (2) There are important differences in referral and assessment of learners across programs and systems; and having so many individual and different assessment approaches and instruments creates serious problems for learners and their transitions.

> (3) There is a general and strong perception among practitioners that program referral decisions are frequently (and all too often) based on the needs of sponsors (or definitions of their programs), rather than the needs of learners.

(B) Learners Transitions Among Programs

> (4) Overwhelmingly, practitioners say "most people don't move" to other programs, though, some learners (comparatively few) do. In particular, learners are unlikely to move across sectors or systems; that is, progress is within colleges and within school boards and is generally confined to upper level learners.

> (5) It is nearly impossible to find data which tracks learners across programs; a few programs do, but most don't track learners in a way that makes firm conclusions possible.

> (6) The vast majority of transitions to credit programs are "assessment-based" in Metro; "relationship-based" in other areas.

(C) Main Factors in Learner Transitions: Why Too Few Learners Move

> (7) Learners are not at the right level or haven't made enough progress.

> (8) Different providers deliver their programs in ways that are incompatible with what the learner needs or can manage.

> (9) Some learners are moving... but not really moving.

> (10) There are significant gaps in the continuum of literacy services in some areas.

Major Challenges and Alternative Approaches

(A) Defining Programs Across the Education and Training System

> (11) Practitioners and administrators hope that revised descriptions of the Literacy and Basic Skills program, particularly learning outcomes and levels, will help both providers and learners better understand expectations.

(12) It is unclear if Secondary School Reform, currently underway at the Ministry, will address the need for clear standards and criteria for adult credit programs.

(13) Many practitioners would welcome clear definitions of other programs, including Ontario Works, Employment Insurance, CEPP and the activities provided through their funding.

(14) There is a general perception that programming provided to many, if not most, learners does not address the relationship between literacy needs and needs for employability skills, employment supports, and personal supports.

(B) Developing Clear Processes and Criteria for Learners' Transitions

(15) Many practitioners and administrators in literacy programs want to use learning outcomes to recognize progress and assist with learner transitions and program articulation.

(16) There is consensus among practitioners and administrators, in both literacy and other programs, that learning outcomes are not likely to be the basis for transitions to other programs.

(C) Developing Planning Processes to Support Effective Transitions and Programming

(17) Some practitioners and administrators observed that there are considerable resources available in the community, from a variety of sources, to meet learners' needs, and that these resources can be used more effectively.

(18) Goal definition, assessment, and the development of individual learning plans are tasks that many practitioners feel can and should be done cooperatively.

(19) Practitioners from all sectors are concerned with developing effective and efficient methods to track learners leaving their programs and, in particular, to subsequent programs.

(20) Many practitioners and administrators voiced the need to develop new relationships among programs and funders/sponsors which will meet learner needs, including better transitions, and community needs, including improved program effectiveness and accountability.