

# LEARNING CURVES

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FREE

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## HOW WILL YOU VOTE?

By Anne McDonagh

**“Let us be clear: our relative wealth is greater than at any time in our history. Our collective ability to build a strong, caring and inclusive society in which everyone can participate has never been greater.”**

*(from an article in the Toronto Star, Apocalyptic Crisis Budgeting, by Edmund Pries)*

On October 6, yet another election takes place. This time it is the Ontario provincial election. The Progressive Conservatives under the leadership of Tim Hudak, the New Democratic Party under Andrea Horwath and the Green Party under Mike Schreiner are trying to unseat Premier Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal Party.

Not everyone is interested in politics

or has the time to keep well-informed; yet an informed electorate is necessary in a democratic society. As citizens we should take the time to analyze election issues and think about what we want for our society as well as what we want for ourselves and our families. If we apply our critical

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## MASTERING A LANGUAGE THE KEYS TO LEARNING SUCCESS

BY ANGELA WALCOTT

**F**ive people sit in a circle with a list of questions in their hands. They are waiting for a response. Question #1 reads: Did you watch a movie on the weekend? It sounds simple enough. Yet it is hard, if the answer isn't going to be in your mother tongue. A pensive woman in her thirties volunteers, “Je suis allée au cinéma et j'ai vu un film. C'était bon.” This is a meeting of the minds -- French and English minds of course. Participants exercise their left/right brain during Conversation

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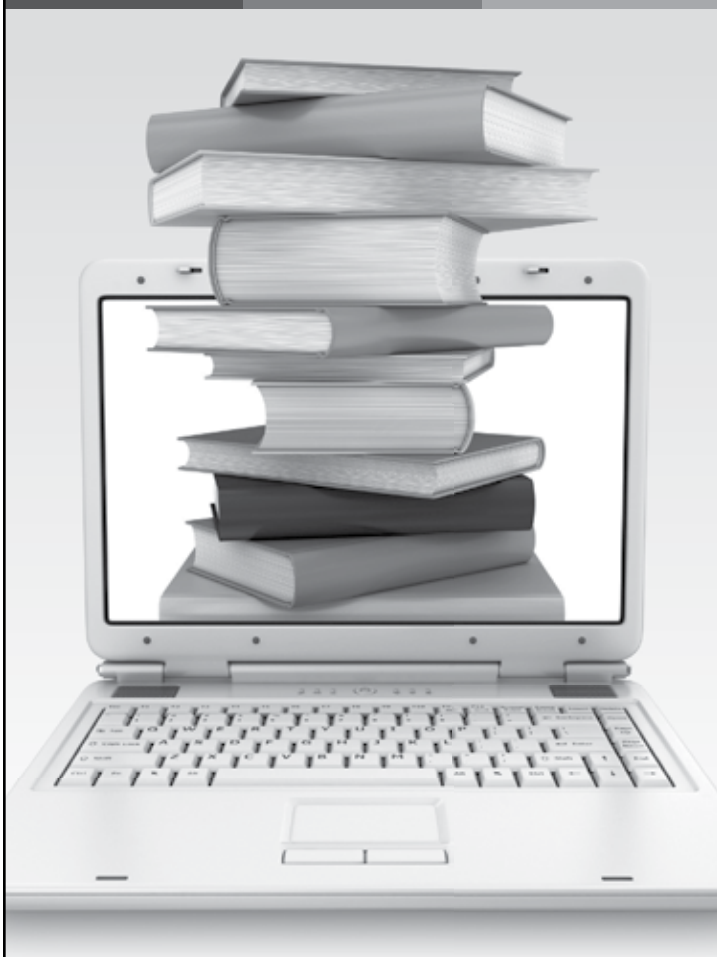
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# HOW WILL YOU VOTE?

## CONTINUED FROM 1

thinking skills to the issues raised in the campaign, we will not be easily duped by politicians. Here are some issues to think about before you decide how you will vote.

First of all, beware of the most popular promise politicians make: to cut taxes. Many people object to paying taxes and often favor the politician who promises tax cuts. But it is not the ordinary wage earner who benefits most from tax cuts—perhaps a few hundred dollars a year. Corporations and the wealthy among us, whose legal teams have already found loopholes that lower their taxes, are the ones who lobby for and benefit from tax cuts and often pay less in taxes than the ordinary person proportionately.

Political parties whose main platform is to cut taxes or give away money with tax credits are purposely shrinking government tax revenues. They want to be able to say quite honestly, at some time in the future, that government cannot afford services such as education or health care or housing for seniors etc and the many other services we take for granted. Rather than build a community where people look after one another, which our social safety net is intended to do, these small government cheerleaders prefer a society of rugged individualists. And make no mistake. The politicians cannot cut taxes without cutting services, no matter what they say!

“So what?” you say. “I’d like a few

more bucks in my wallet. Why not vote for the anti-tax party.” Here are a few reasons: First if we pool our resources (which is what we do when we pay taxes), we get more “bang for our buck.” Secondly, you may think you don’t care about the services we would lose but in fact you may find that you lose services that you value. For example, right now the province of Ontario funds education from kindergarten to grade 12. Think of the expense if you had to pay for your or your children’s education yourself. The government funds ESL programs and literacy programs and it subsidizes continuing education programs. Perhaps you benefit from those services. Here’s another example; we value our beleaguered health care system, which is delivered by the province and paid for with our taxes. Would you trade it for a few dollars in tax cuts?

Many times in the past few decades, politicians have promised to cut taxes but maintain services. Never has that happened. Services are canceled or user fees imposed. You end up paying for a mediocre service that once was free and effective. For example, in the nineties here in Ontario, education went on the chopping block especially adult education, which was cut by almost 75 percent in one fell swoop. Premier McGuinty has restored a little of that funding. But it takes years to recover from the “slash and

burn” policies of a government like that.

Another issue to consider before you decide what party to vote for is the party’s vision for the future. Does the party platform take into account the profound changes that are taking place in our society? Does it address the changes creatively and the people affected by the changes compassionately? For instance, Ontario is undergoing deep changes in its economy. The old manufacturing sector, which supplied some of the best paying jobs, has gone because of off-shoring and/or technology. How should a government deal with people who did not anticipate being out of work at mid-life. Incidentally, the current McGuinty government has responded admirably with Second Career, a program for workers whose jobs have disappeared.

Despite the changes that affect many negatively, we know there are opportunities emerging that could make Ontario truly prosperous once again. Which party sees these opportunities? In advanced manufacturing like robotics and automation? In life sciences? In information technology? In aerospace? In interactive digital media? Seeing these opportunities and making them available to citizens requires a government that sees beyond the next election. Ask yourself what political party in Ontario has a realistic plan for the future and if elected is most likely to seize these opportunities.

The greatest challenge of our time is, of course, climate change. Where do the political parties stand on what to do about climate change? Tim Hudak, leader of the Progressive Conservatives wants to kill the Green Energy Act which was hailed by environmental groups everywhere as the most ambitious effort to curb greenhouse gases in North America. The current government’s intention is to make Ontario the North American leader in dealing with climate change.

The aging population should also be given high priority by the parties. If they were in government, how would the Ontario political parties deal with this demographic challenge? How can the health care system be adapted? How do we deal with so many retirees and so few workers? How can the old be cared for properly?

There are other issues that you may want to investigate before you decide who to vote for. But the subjects raised here give you lots to think about,

It should be clear to all political parties that the drastic changes taking place in our society require a well-informed and well-educated citizenry. Whoever is elected must recognize that education and lifelong learning are the foundation of our future economic and social success and fund these sectors accordingly.



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# SHOPPING FOR COURSES

Adults find shopping for courses confusing for several reasons. There is no friendly high school guidance counselor to help them; adult education is like a market place with providers selling their courses rather than telling you about a more suitable one elsewhere; reading a course calendar is as difficult as reading a computer manual. Finally, for newcomers the whole education system here is new and confusing.

## In class or online

More and more classes are offered online instead of in class.

Online learning is more flexible as you don't have to be in class every week. However, most courses have due dates for assignments. A few have a flexible schedule like the Independent Learning Centre where you can go at your own pace. The flexibility works well for adults who often have competing demands made on their time.

Some distance education courses have continuous intake like those offered through the Independent Learning Centre where you earn high school credits, or take ESL courses [www.ilc.org](http://www.ilc.org). Many have monthly intake, like the colleges. Go to [www.ontariolearn.com](http://www.ontariolearn.com) to see listings or check the college calendar where online courses are listed. Many are based on the same term schedules as in-class courses. For universities go to [www.cvu-uvic.ca](http://www.cvu-uvic.ca)

Online courses will develop your computer skills and online research skills. However, online learning requires you to be self-disciplined. It is very easy to put off doing your assignment online, whereas you cannot put off going to class.

## Adult Education is like a Shopping Basket.

Shopping around for courses is time consuming for adults. They start from where they are and reach out into various educational sectors in order to meet a variety of needs, unlike children who start at grade 1 and go on to the next grade in a ladder of specified courses. For example an adult learner could go to a college one night a week for an accounting course and fit in a business administration course online from a university. Both courses would be accredited to a Certified General Accountant program. Then on Saturdays this fictional student could take a painting class at the local school for interest.

## Where can you look?

For those living in Toronto and the GTA check out the Neighbourhood Learning List on page 2 for educational providers in your area.

## FOR HIGH SCHOOL CREDITS OR A DIPLOMA

## School Boards

School Boards in Toronto and the GTA offer high school credits in adult day schools where you go full-time or through evening courses where you go part-time.

You can earn high school credits online or by correspondence through the Independent Learning Centre. (See online section in this article)

You can earn the equivalent of high school diploma by doing General Education Development (GED). This is a test which you study for and if you pass you get a high school equivalency diploma. Call 211 to see who offers this program.

## Do you need high school?

Admission criteria for college or university programs often say that a high school diploma is required. But they also describe something called "mature student" admission for those who haven't completed high school. A mature student is over 18, has been out of school for a year or two and does not have a high school diploma.

However most programs say you need high school or the "equivalent." This means you can be admitted on knowledge and experience gained from work or volunteer activities.

Note that high school diplomas are accepted from other countries. Colleges have lists of high schools from all over the world which they accept as equivalent to Ontario high school. You may want to take high school courses to help you prepare for the demands of a college or university course. However there are other options.

## College Academic Upgrading is Free

When you think of college courses you think of having to pay tuition but some college courses are free.

When applying to a college full-time program without a high school diploma or with one from another country, your English, math and science skills will be tested to see if you are up to the level needed to do the program. If not, you can do a free academic upgrading program at the colleges. These are open to newcomers and those educated here. These upgrading programs are usually listed in the full-time day calendars.

You should note that most part-time courses which are offered in the evening have open admissions, which means you can try any course. If you fail, it's your time and money lost.

Each one of these college upgrading programs has a slightly different name: George Brown School of Work and College Preparation 416-415-5000 Ext 2427; Seneca Academic Upgrading 416-491-5050 Ext. 4772; Centennial Career and Work Transitions 416-289-5000 Ext. 7022; Humber Academic Upgrading 416-675-5000 Ext. 4842; Sheridan Workforce Development Program 905-845-9430; Durham Academic

and Career Entrance 905-721-2000

And you can do these ACE courses online [www.acedistancedelivery.ca](http://www.acedistancedelivery.ca)

## University

Both full-time and part-time programs have admissions criteria as you must be accepted into the program even to take one course.

However bridging courses are offered to those who do not meet the admission criteria. By earning a certain percentage in your bridging course you can be admitted to a university program and your qualifying course can count as a credit in your program.

For bridging programs, call the

Academic Bridging Program at the University of Toronto, Wordsworth College 416-978-7487; the Pre-University Studies program at York University, the Division of Continuing Education, Faculty of Arts and Science at 416-736-5616. At Ryerson University, by doing well in the open admissions courses offered through the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, you can demonstrate your ability to handle a full-time credit program.

For newcomers admission criteria for English can be earned through ESL university programs instead of writing TOEFL or COPE tests. See next section.

# ENGLISH FOR NEWCOMERS

For newcomers choosing a course can be overwhelming as there are so many options. Usually the first place you learn is recommended by a friend, then you shop around. Newcomers always ask what the difference is between LINC Language Instruction for Newcomers and ESL English as a Second Language. LINC gets funding from the Canadian Federal government and ESL from the Ontario government. LINC only accepts landed immigrants but ESL accepts refugee claimants and citizens. Through LINC you may be eligible to receive TTC tickets and some programs have child minding. In an ESL program, those who are on social assistance would qualify for a Metro pass if you do some volunteer work in the community. Sometimes subsidized childcare is provided if space is available.

ESL is really a school board program but classes are often run in community centres or libraries. LINC courses can be run by a school board or community association. Check the Neighbourhood Learning List for school boards or call 211 for community associations to find out where LINC and ESL courses are offered.

## High School

Some newcomers choose to learn English in an adult day school program as they like the structure of a curriculum driven course. High School. ESL and LINC focus on skill development though LINC is more curriculum driven.

## Flexible Programs

The high school credit programs and LINC tend to have set standards for attendance and lateness. If you are away only a few days, you are dropped from the program. ESL programs are more flexible; you can be away for whatever reason and start back when you are ready.

## Online

You can do credit or non-credit ESL at the Independent Learning Centre. Call 416-484-2704. You do need a volunteer to help you do the course though.

## Libraries

Many libraries have ESL Conversation Circles and other programs for newcomers which are free. Ask for a What's On program guide at the library.

As well libraries have large collections of ESL resources such as taped stories or grammar books to borrow. Also some taped stories in the children's section are useful for adults.

## Web sites

The WEB has many free ESL sites. Just punch ESL into Google and shop around.

## Free and Fee Based Courses

So far we have talked about courses that are free of charge. The colleges have some ESL courses with fees and some without and there are the free Academic Upgrading programs (see High School Section) University and private language schools are fee based.

## Colleges

ESL college programs usually require LINC or ESL Level 5. But you will be tested and if you score well enough, you will be admitted. Remember the market factor in adult education. It is better for the college to have you in their program than in a school board or community program.

## Universities

Here you must pay a fee but if you obtain a certain mark, you don't have to write TOEFL or COPE.

Call the English Language Program at the School of Continuing Studies at the University of Toronto 416-978-5104; York University English Language Institute 416-736-5353; the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education at Ryerson University 416-979-5035.

## Language Schools

Private Language Schools are listed in the Yellow Pages under Schools-Languages. They charge fees.



# MATURE STUDENTS HEAD BACK TO SCHOOL WITH UoT BRIDGING PROGRAM

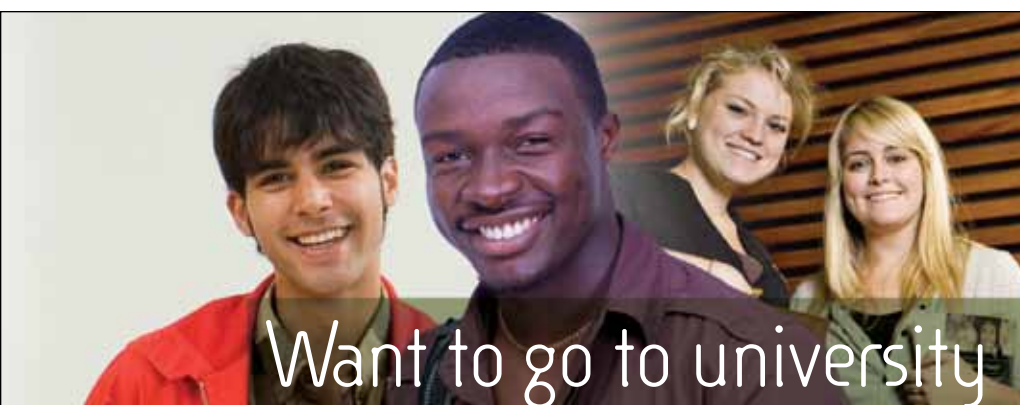
**H**undreds of mature students 20 years of age and over, will be heading back to school this fall through the University of Toronto's Millie Rotman Shime Academic Bridging Program. For students who have not completed high school or a two-year college diploma (or who have completed these studies with grades insufficient for direct entry admissions), Bridging offers a pathway to undergraduate studies at the University of Toronto.

"Students often assume, since they did not enrol in university directly after high school or college, that admission is not possible without upgrading or repeating courses – and that is just not true," says Winnie Wong-Nicholson, associate registrar of the Academic Bridging Program. "Applicants are extremely excited when they learn that the Bridging Program at U of T will allow them to start studies immediately in a degree level university course."

The course is intended to bridge the gap between a student's prior education and the requirements for first-year university courses in humanities and social sciences. Successful completion of the Academic Bridging Program guarantees students admissions to the University of Toronto's Faculty of Arts and Science with one retained credit towards their undergraduate degree.

"We offer a small classroom environment with plenty of one-on-one feedback from instructors, as well as academic support specifically intended for adult students who may have been away from formal education for some time." Students attend either three or four hours of classes per week, depending upon whether they begin their studies in September or January.

For more information go to: [www.wdw.utoronto.ca/bridging](http://www.wdw.utoronto.ca/bridging)



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# ONLINE LEARNING TIPS

Heather Junke

Many people readily imagine the freedom and flexibility of online learning. Think of sitting at home in your pajamas, setting your own hours and working at your own pace — sounds perfect.

“Yet it’s that same freedom and flexibility that creates some of the biggest challenges for a lot of online learners,” says Candace Figg, an Associate Professor, Teaching and Learning with Technology, at Brock University.

Figg is currently the Acting Director for Brock’s Centre for Adult Education and Community Outreach. She cautions learners to fully understand the responsibility that comes with learning in an online environment.

“Unlike a classroom setting, learners must set their own goals and structure their own learning environment,” says Figg. “It can be very challenging the first time out for online learners to develop these structures and routines on their own.”

“There is also the technological learning curve,” adds Marj Rempel, a Brock University Facilitator of Adult Education online courses.

“Many struggle with the nature of organizing themselves with the technical resources available,” she says. “Another area of stress for learners is the discussion tool or the forums. Some feel they must answer every question as if they were writing a paper. It takes them a while to discover the nature of discussions and how they replace the discussion that happens in a face-to-face class.”

“You can conquer the challenges,” say Figg and Rempel. “And, what you will gain is a thoroughly engaging learning experience—both academically and personally.”

“Participate as much as possible in the discussions,” says Rempel. “This is where you have an opportunity to deepen your level of understanding as you explore concepts and ideas with your peers.”

Above all, says Figg, “Breathe. You are not alone. Stay in touch with your online

instructors. Do not hesitate to contact them with questions or concerns. They are there to facilitate your success.”

Figg and Rempel offer the following online learning tips:

- Take time to orient yourself to your online tools — locate assignments, discussion boards, know how to contact the instructor and your classmates, where your grades will be posted, etc.
- Set a dedicated, scheduled time to complete course work each week. Leaving course work to "when you have time" means that other tasks in your life will take priority over your course work. Setting that appointment means that you, and your family, understand that this work is important and establishes a routine.
- Allow plenty of time to complete tasks. There is a great deal of reading in the online environment. As well, you may have questions for your instructor or classmates. Allow time for the instructor/ classmates to receive and respond to your questions (via email/discussion boards).
- Keep your journal going at all times — it helps keep your perspective on all the pieces of information that have come your way and helps you to articulate your own thoughts and ideas.
- Take advantage of all the resources available: videos, podcasts, readings, discussions (asynchronous and synchronous, if available) and more.

Brock University’s Centre for Adult Education and Community Outreach offers a Bachelor of Education in Adult Education degree program and a Certificate in Adult Education program in site-based and online delivery.

Brock is now accepting applications for the Winter 2012 session. Find out more by visiting <http://brocku.ca/education/futurestudents/adulted>

# A SECOND CHANCE

By Louise Bruff

I have always loved learning and I feel so blessed to have had a second chance to learn

When I traveled to Canada in the early seventies, little did I know that I would spend my years working hard in a factory. I worked for almost 35 year in a factory and I never got anywhere.

I tried to stay cheerful. I would remind myself of my blessings and how nothing more should be expected. I used to wake up at five o’clock and sometimes much earlier in the winter. I would prepare myself to leave for work at 6 a.m. Just before I left I would ensure my children had their breakfast.

Some mornings I would dwell on the struggles it took to dress myself, comb my hair and put on my boots while enduring a spiking pain in the palms of my hands because I had developed carpal tunnel syndrome. It was a crippling pain caused by the job I was doing.

Then one morning all employees were called to the cafeteria for a meeting. The factory doors were closing. I was frightened. Although it wasn’t the best job, it allowed me to pay my bills and put food on the table for my family.

I never had the chance to do all the things I dreamt of doing due to the crippling pain which spread over my hands and sapped my strength. There were many things I could not do. Even doing my house work and caring for my family was difficult.

When I saw the postings about University in the Community, a big smile spread over my face. I shouted, “Yes! Thank You God”. The

door was open once again. When I look at all the courses I have taken in University in the Community, I am amazed. I have learned so much. I have studied a lot of literature; I have learned about ancient history and how people of other times lived, and I haven’t stopped learning.

I feel brand new. Inside happiness is flowing like a river. Life is a learning process. No matter how old or smart you are, you never stop learning.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the University in the Community for opening not just a door for me but windows filled with hope.

*University in the Community on hold*  
*University in the Community is offering two courses this fall. They will be the last courses until we raise some money to support University in the Community.*  
*Since 2004, University in the Community has received grants from the Trillium Foundation and the Morrow Foundation. With that financial support we have been able to offer two evening courses three times a year for eight years.*  
*During the last academic year with the support of Senior College and St. Stephen’s Community House, we also offered two 6-week lecture series. We hope to do the same this year.*  
*In the early fall we will be launching a serious fundraising campaign. In the meantime, if you would like to donate to University in the Community, go to the Workers’ Educational Association website [www.weacanada.ca](http://www.weacanada.ca) where there is a Donate Button from Canada Helps. WEA is a registered charity and so you will get a tax receipt for your donation. WEA is the publisher of Learning Curves and a partner with a number of organizations in supporting University in the Community.*



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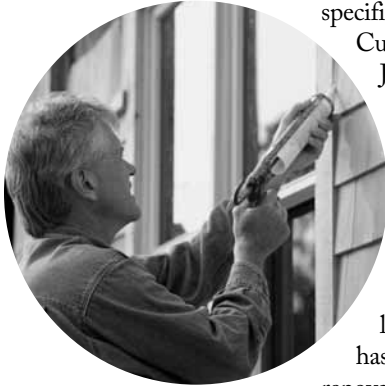
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## General Interest courses.

Baby boomers, who are now starting to retire, are looking for courses that interest them such as courses in painting, music, languages, exercise, dance, digital photography, crafts—anything from the arts to yoga. For a full listing of creative courses look at the December 2010 issue of Learning Curves at [www.learning-curves.ca](http://www.learning-curves.ca). Sometimes newcomers will take these courses out of interest but also to make friends with a Canadian who shares their interest. Any of these courses can be taken for work related purposes; it depends on the motivation of the student.



## School Boards, Parks and Recreation Centres, Libraries.

The Toronto District School Board lists

these courses on [www.learn4life.ca](http://www.learn4life.ca). The Parks and Recreation Centres list these courses in a booklet called *Toronto Fun*. The libraries are not just a place to borrow books; they also have G.I programs. Ask for the *What's On guide*. All these programs are low cost or free. At the schools and recreation centres there is a reduced rate if you are on social assistance.

## Colleges

Part-time studies calendars for the colleges list similar programs in subjects like computers, photography, languages, lifestyle, special interest. However each college has ones specific to it like: George Brown's Culinary Arts, Fashion and Jewellery, Dance; Humber's Arts and Performance, Horticulture, Fitness and Recreation; Sheidan's Art and Design has drawing and painting, art using ceramics, wood and glass; Centennial's lifestyle and leisure program has eight courses on home renovations; Durham's has home sewing under Life and Leisure.

## Universities

The continuing education programs at

universities have open admission courses for general interest. For instance, the School of Continuing Studies at the U. of T. offers a Creative Writing program and the G.Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education at Ryerson U has a photography section for the serious amateur among many others.

The Ontario College of Art and Design offers numerous workshops through CE.

## Science Centre, the Museum (ROM) and Art Gallery (AGO)

All three of these cultural centres offer courses or workshops.

## Liberal Arts

You may be interested in liberal arts courses like history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, world religions, art history, literature, economics and so on.

For a full listing of liberal arts courses look at the March April 2011 issue of Learning Curves [www.learning-curves.ca](http://www.learning-curves.ca)

## Colleges

At the colleges these courses are listed

under Liberal Studies or General Education. Humber has one of the largest offerings in this area.

## Universities

Liberal arts courses are really the forte of the universities but they do not have open admissions except for their Continuing Education departments. You need to apply as a special student to take a course without being admitted to the program.

Look through the calendars for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the U. of T. and the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional studies at York U. At Ryerson they are listed under the subject headings. A lot of these will be offered in the daytime but some will be in the evening. For online learning offerings go to [www.canadian-universities.net](http://www.canadian-universities.net)

## Seniors

There are special departments that develop courses just for Seniors. At the U. of T. there is the Academy for Lifelong Learning; at Ryerson U, the Life Institute; at George Brown College the Senior's Association. At the TDSB there are Senior's Daytime courses listed in their Learn4Life Calendar.

# WORK

One of the prime motivations for going back to school is to improve your career. Getting a Certificate, Diploma or Degree from a college or university or Certification from a professional association the Canadian Purchasing Association or a License for a trade are multi-year pursuits for adults.

Adults take courses through part-time studies at a College or the Continuing Education program at a university or a school board, in the evening or on weekends where there is open admissions.

Some adults go in the day to college programs full-time or part-time but here you must be admitted to the program then take the course. For university whether you go part-time or full-time during the day or part-time at night (if you go three nights a week this is considered full-time) you must be admitted to a program of study to take any of these courses.

Note if you are interested in medical technology, you should check out the Michener Institute of Technology which specializes in this area.

Part of being admitted is dealing with whether you have high school or not. See the first section of this article.

## Laddering your way up to a Degree

For many newcomers, the partnerships between colleges and universities in Ontario are confusing as in their countries, colleges and universities are separate. As a result they waste time and money.

Here's how you ladder up to a university degree by starting with evening courses at a college. Start with several open admission college courses at night that are equivalent to ones in the day diploma programs. Find

out if the diploma program is partnered with a university degree program. If it is, get the Diploma (2 years), then go to the university partnered program for two years to get a degree. When you have done as many college courses in your diploma as you can at night, negotiate some time off work during the day to go part-time during the day or do the courses online. Once you get the diploma, apply to the partnered university. Do as many courses as you can at night part-time then again negotiate time off work to go part-time in the day or do online courses. College courses have lower tuition than university so you could save money and you don't have to give up your job and lose valuable work time..

## Professional Associations

Colleges and universities partner with professional associations. Their calendars will indicate which ones. So a course could count towards a diploma and towards the certification program of a professional association. In the laddering process described above you could also be earning professional certification by applying your college and university courses to this designation as well as a degree.

For a full examination of professional associations and articles detailing membership based associations for engineers, computer specialists, health care practitioners, and business support staff like accountants, purchasing clerks see the February March 2010 issue of Learning Curves at [www.learning-curves.ca](http://www.learning-curves.ca). There are articles on this topic listed there.

Most important, these associations have job banks. An employer who is a member of an association will first turn to the job bank when he needs to hire. You

are tapping into a great hidden job market.

These associations are membership-based so you don't have to have certification to join. Some work experience either here or from another country will do.

The Associations Canada Directory found in most libraries will lead you to over 17,000 associations.

## Career Colleges

These are private colleges so the tuition is higher than the public colleges like Centennial. However a lot of students who take career college programs qualify for programs like Second Career. They are smaller than large public colleges and therefore more personal. Here, you can go as fast as you are able, then slow down when you hit some course work that is harder. They can do this because the class sizes are quite small, less than 15 so the teacher can customize the course.

See [www.oacc.on.ca](http://www.oacc.on.ca) for a list of career colleges. Note you can earn professional association designations at these colleges too.

However it is harder to transfer credits from these private colleges to public educational institutions.

## Use previous learning to get in, then negotiate advanced standing.

A word of advice, first negotiate admission based on your previous education and work experience but don't start to ask for exemptions from courses until you are admitted. Why? If you are admitted to a full-time program, the institution will expect to get funds from the government for each course you take. If you start asking for exemptions before you are even admitted, they know they will not be getting as much funding for you. So self-



interest makes them less interested in you.

Colleges have Prior Learning Assessment which can evaluate your previous courses to see what you can be exempt from once you are admitted.. Universities don't have this but have something called advanced standing which you can apply for. Adult day schools will give you credits for work and life experience in your high school program.

## Apprenticeship-trades training.

Here you are actually paid to learn. You work for a mechanic, for example, who agrees to train you to be a fully licensed mechanic. Most people think of a tradesperson as a plumber, electrician etc. but the trades are very broad. You can become a baker, early childhood educator, hairdresser etc.

Call the following Ontario Apprenticeship Offices. Mississauga 905-279-7333 Toronto 416-326-5800 and Pickering 905-837-7721. These offices will assess your previous training.

## Community-Based Training

These programs are organized by a community-based organization. Like career colleges they are small and more personal. However they are not for profit organizations funded by the Ontario government to train specific groups who may have more trouble finding work, like women, immigrants and older workers. Skills for Change and Working Women are examples of these. Call 211 for others.

## Financial Aid

There is financial aid for part-time students. So be sure to find the Financial Services office on campus and ask if there are any bursaries you could qualify for. Don't forget to ask your employer to help pay for your course. Many will if asked.



# IS NEGATIVITY HINDERING YOUR JOB SEARCH?

BY SONNY WONG



**T**he Canadian labour market has become more complex over the last few decades. Although the unemployment rate is down, no one measures the effects job loss has on individuals. Uninformed, everyday conversations about the job market or why people are unemployed etc. can interfere with people's attitudes towards their job search and their careers. Career counsellors should fully explore their clients' thinking around career and work in order to identify employment barriers. Foreign Trained Professionals (FTP), mature workers and new graduates may experience a great deal of anxiety due to their unemployment.

Some FTPs believe that Canadian credentials/experience are the primary career obstacles rather than the demands for specific professional skills. Mature workers believe their work experience and skills are obsolete and perceive the young to be multi-talented. Because they have difficulty finding a job, new graduates think their degrees are useless rather than blaming their lack of experience. These beliefs—whether they are myths or realities—have somehow found their way into the heads of these job seekers. In turn, these negative voices hinder their job search and career development. It is not uncommon for a FTP to refer to his/her career identity in the past tense; "I was an engineer back home." A mature worker seems to be engulfed by his/her biological age rather than his/her professional attributes; "I am 55—too old to be employed again." New graduates say, "What good is it to have a degree; I will never work in my field." Such negative scripts prevent these job seekers from moving on and engaging in effective job searches. Eventually they may very well consider themselves to be "unemployable."

The longer individuals remain in this negative stage, the more likely it is that unemployment will become their status. Labour market rejections are felt as personal injuries chipping away

at their identity and self-worth. These negative attitudes become ingrained.

It is not uncommon for these job seekers to experience depression and isolation; they may withdraw from society and their support systems. They consider their past professional achievements to be meaningless. Some may become marginalized. They thus limit their networking and career opportunities. These job seekers anticipate the future with uncertainty and anxiety. Eventually, they may even view the employed with mistrust.

It is important for career practitioners to get to know the unemployed person in his/her totality. Career counsellors working with the unemployed must go beyond assisting clients with career assessment exercises, career goals, and job search skills' training. By finding out the clients' duration of unemployment and their attitude to it, the counsellor will understand how they are coping with their unemployment. It is vital that career counsellors elicit their clients' feedback and perceptions of why they are unemployed, and to assess the validity and reliability of their thinking. Moreover, counsellors must make every effort to counter the clients' claims that their unemployed self is their identity. In this way the counselors will find out the types of barriers to address and can begin to work with their clients to alter their negative scripts. We all have professional insecurities: challenging these inner, negative voices is key to career advancement and mobility.

*Sonny Wong, M.Ed., holds a Masters Degree, from the University of Toronto, in Adult Education/Counselling Psychology with a focus on Work and Career. He offers one-on-one confidential counselling sessions and delivers train-the-trainer series for organizational/professional development. Presently, Wong works at Ryerson University as the Faculty of Arts Career Counsellor.*

# DEAR ELCEE

Dear Elcee will be a feature in every issue of Learning Curves. Send your questions about education, training, careers, jobs to:

Elcee

The WEA of Canada

157 Carlton Street, Suite 205

Toronto, On M5A 2k2



*Dear Elcee:*

*I have been thinking about going back to school now for the longest time. I really want to get into a career where I can really help people but am confused about all the offerings out there! I believe I would like to study social service and am trying to decide between a one year private college and a two year community college. Help!*

*Sam*

Hi Sam!

Good for you to have decided on a career path! You didn't tell me if you have any post-secondary education so I will give you two options dependent upon this. If you have a degree in the social sciences already behind you (i.e. sociology or psychology) you can consider a one year program at a private college or check out the fast track programs at community colleges. If not, to be competitive in the job market, a two year college program is the minimum. Consider it like cooking a dish in a microwave – great for popcorn but you wouldn't want to cook a roast in it. Community colleges have relationships with employers for placements and have established reputations.

You may also wish to consider setting up information interviews with people in the social service field. Ask them what and where they studied. They will feel flattered to be asked.

Anyone considering a career in a "helping" profession should start looking into volunteer work in that area as soon as possible (if you are not already doing so). Colleges and future employers in this area look at the volunteer work you have done primarily for two reasons. They wish to see if you have a "clear picture" of your chosen profession (It may seem nice but the realities may be very different) and it will give

them an idea of your commitment.

Don't forget to do your research. Most libraries, schools and employment centres have a subscription to the Career Cruising website. This website can give you a great deal of information on your chosen field along with "day in the life" interviews and education expectations for hundreds of careers.

Another great site to check out is [workingincanada.gc.ca](http://workingincanada.gc.ca). This site will give you an idea of the job market for your field, accreditation requirements, average wages and labour market information.

Of course, the most well known site for jobs in the non-profit or social service field is Charity Village ([www.charityvillage.com](http://www.charityvillage.com)).

Another resource is [poss.ca](http://poss.ca) which will provide an extensive array of articles on different professions among other great tools and resources.

For volunteer work, both Charity Village and Volunteer Toronto list current volunteer openings. I also recommend people who are looking into working in the non-profit sector to check out [211Toronto.ca](http://211Toronto.ca). 211 has listings for all community resources in the GTA and can provide great insight into the many wonderful non-profits, NGO's and other agencies working to assist people in our city.

**Good luck!!!**

# MASTERING A LANGUAGE THE KEYS TO LEARNING SUCCESS

CONTINUED FROM 1

Circle sessions where the real challenge isn't subject-verb agreement but how to master a language. It requires a few tools—namely hard work and determination.

Just ask Deborah who was diagnosed with a language disability at 49. "What that translates to is that when people talk, my brain doesn't catch the meaning. I [have to] work harder," she says. After attending the circle for several years she learned the importance of immersing herself in French environments. Today her commitment has paid off; she volunteers as a group facilitator.

Things clicked once Deborah knew what she was dealing with. "For the past six years I have listened to French radio every day to practice listening skills," she says. She attends, French social and cultural events, speaks French on a weekly basis with francophone friends and participates in a French book club. Deborah has learned to analyze everything. She read somewhere that with age, short-term memory worsens and long-term memory increases so she discovered a way to get the information into her long-term memory by devising a system. "Class was hard but I overcame it by over-learning things. I would make lists of nouns, color-code them and organize these words into categories." By using memory aids, her French vocabulary grew exponentially.

Her tenacity originates from a burning

desire to decipher the language, which is why she won't give up easily. She realized that Deborah had to stop thinking in English. The more knowledge that came to her naturally (without translating or thinking about it) the easier learning became. By absorbing as many words, phrases and sentences as possible, the language became embedded in her subconscious and she no longer had to think about what she was saying.

Surfing the net led her to useful French websites that had quizzes and interactive learning opportunities. Once she improved her confidence, Deborah started a French blog. It helped to put her understanding of words and grammar to the test. Then, she practiced speaking for 30 minutes every day. She sometimes recorded herself to mimic the French sounds.

But most of all, she maintained a positive attitude throughout the entire process. It is easy to be discouraged if people speak too quickly and you miss what they say. But if you catch a few words you can get the gist of what they said.

Take it from Deborah; if you have the drive, learning a foreign language is far easier than you think.

*Angela Walcott has a Magazine Publishing Certificate from Ryerson University. She is a freelance writer and editor who offers professional writing and editing services.*

# NEED A CUSTOMIZED PROGRAM? CALL A COLLEGE.

BY: WENDY TERRY

**H**ave you ever looked and looked for a course on a special topic for your staff and could not find one. My suggestion is to call up someone like Cheryl Evans, who is the Promotion, Events and Communications officer at the School of Social and Community Studies at Humber Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. She will find that course for you.

On June 22, I attended a workshop on Adapted Dialectical Behaviour Therapy at Humber's Lakeshore campus along with about twenty-five Child and Youth Workers. I happened onto this workshop when I was speaking to Cheryl about Learning Curves. Although this workshop was for those working with youth with developmental issues, the resources presented were applicable to anyone's life.

The workshop provided practical tools to recognize behaviours that need

to be changed and how to change them. As well, ways to monitor the results on a regular basis were suggested. Since the workshop I have used these tools with my ESL students to get them to think about things they need to change and what they could do to make the changes.

I have been reading continuing education calendars since we have been publishing Learning Curves, that is, for over 10 years, and I have never seen a workshop like this.

So if you or your employees come up with an idea of the kind of professional development you need and you don't know where to turn, call the college department you think would have the subject expertise. With any luck you will be put in touch with someone like Cheryl, who will develop a customized program for you.



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**Ally** (noun) One in helpful association with another, one with common interests, backer, benefactor, booster, champion, colleague, companion, comrade, endorser, friend, helper, partner, patron, supporter, upholder

**Ally** (verb) To place in a friendly association, to connect in a personal relationship, band together, combine, come aboard, come together, consolidate, cooperate, fuse, hook up, join together, meld, merge, mingle, network, plug into, pool, relate, stand behind, sympathize, team up, tie in, unite



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# SYLVIA GRADUATES AT 63 INTO A SECOND CAREER.

**O**n August 26, Sylvia graduated from Access Business College with a Diploma in Hospitality and Events Planning. She started her program on November 15 knowing literally nothing about computers. On graduation day, her fellow students were thanking her for helping them with their computer classes.

If you ever felt hopeless about computers, Sylvia's success is a tribute to her determination and the patience of her teachers, James and Vishakha.

Sylvia's training was sponsored by the Ontario Government's Second Career program. This is a program where laid off workers are granted funding to retrain. At Access Business College, a career college, the classes are small so each student receives lots of individual attention.

Sylvia comes from a learning family and they all turned out to support her on graduation day—her husband, her children and their spouses and her grandchildren.

Almost every adult in her



family has learned new things over the years. Harry, her husband, who works at Ontario Power Generation as a mechanic, went back to get a degree in Theology. Harry said that Sylvia supported his learning so he supported hers.

Sylvia's youngest son, Paul, went back to school at George Brown to do a Hospitality program. Paul runs his own catering business and Sylvia will

use her new found skills in Hospitality and Events Planning to work with her son to help his business grow.

Her daughter-in-law is just learning French having moved to Montreal with Sylvia's son Shahan who works at Bombardier. He has learned to pilot a plane. And Sylvia's daughter is doing a B.Sc at the University of Toronto.

Sylvia certainly picked a marketable program as the Hospitality and Events Planning field is one of the largest employers in Toronto. Think of all the visitors and conventions Toronto hosts and all the restaurants, hotels and meeting halls, these people use every year. Sylvia's son will have to treat his Mom well as she could find work in numerous other venues in Toronto.




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