

## **Public Report: Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks**

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks is pleased to acknowledge contributions from the Government of Alberta in order to support the development of new products and services in support of the Canadian Language Benchmarks in Alberta as well as nationally.

With funding in 2004 and 2005 the CCLB was able to:

- Develop and enhance the comprehensive national assessment system that supports the use of CLB in the adult ESL community, education, training and labour market, including a system of recognition of CLB assessors and assessment service providers.
- Strengthen public awareness and image of the Canadian Language Benchmarks and encourage the practical, fair and reliable use of this national standard

### **Building a National Assessment System**

Funding from the Government of Alberta contributed significantly to a series of projects:

- 1. Development of Guidelines for Test Development: CLB 2000 Companion Tables**
- 2. New Workplace Language Assessment (WLA) and pre-screener for CLB 7-10**
- 3. New Versions of the Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT) for CLB 1-8**
- 4. New Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Placement Tool (LPT)**
- 5. New Canadian Language Benchmarks Self-Assessment Tool (CLB 1-12)**

#### **1. Development of Guidelines for CLB Test Development – Phase 1**

*Phase 1 of this project involved reformatting the benchmarks into concise tables to provide an overview of key CLB content. This will facilitate use of the CLB 2000 for task selection, task development, evaluation procedures, assessment development and test instrument alignment activities. An experienced ESL instructor and a CLB Expert worked with the researchers to ensure that the final document addresses the needs of the intended users. The tables were unveiled at a CCLB symposium at TESL Canada in May 2005.*

#### **2. New Workplace Language Assessment (WLA) for CLB 7-10**

The Workplace Language Assessment (WLA), is designed to assess English language proficiency at Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) 7 – 10. It was developed for assessments of internationally-educated newcomers seeking entry into bridge-to-employment and other higher-level programs which prepare new workers to enter the Canadian workforce.

Until now, there has been no standardized tool available to provide reliable reports of language-proficiency in the CLB 7 – 10 range. Development of this tool began only after consultation with agencies serving internationally-educated newcomers to determine the

communicative language needs of workers in professional settings including IT, engineering and accounting.

WLA was piloted with test-takers who have post-secondary education, some work experience and are seeking access into the Canadian workforce. The tool will assess clients in approximately 90 minutes and will measure English language proficiency in four basic skill areas: speaking, listening, reading and writing.

National pilot-testing was conducted in Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg and Toronto to ensure that it provides reliable CLB scores in a time- and cost-efficient manner. One of the unique features of this tool is a pre-test screening tool to help employment counsellors and assessors identify clients in the CLB 7 range before referring them either for a full assessment or for CLBPT/BA assessments for LINC and basic ESL programs. It is expected this will help clients achieve more positive results from the tool. The WLA will be available to meet the needs of a range of workforce-related programs across Canada.

The National Advisory Committee for the WLA project represents a range of stakeholders including workplace trainers, CLB assessors, immigrant-serving agencies and employment preparation programs.

### **3. New Versions of the Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT) for CLB 1-8**

The CCLB has completed development of two new versions of the Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT) (Forms 2 and 3). Following a meeting with Regional Trainers in February, minor changes have been made to these new versions that will apply to all CLBPT test forms.

The Assessment Guide for Forms 2 and 3 includes writing exemplars to be used for orientation sessions, for self-study and skills sharpening. All three sub-tests (reading, writing, and speaking and listening) are completely new. Half-day orientation sessions will be available beginning in the late summer. These will be delivered by CLBPT regional trainers and are mandatory before using the new test forms.

An employment-related version (Form 4) has also been developed and piloted at Bow Valley College and NorQuest College. Form 4 will be appropriate for use with ESL learners seeking entry into employment and career preparation programs that cover the CLB 4 -8 range. As the tasks relate to employment and job-search experiences both in Canada and abroad, it will not be suitable for placement into general language training programs.

### **4. Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Placement Tool (LPT)**

Development of a new *Canadian Language Benchmarks ESL Literacy Placement Tool* aligned to the literacy benchmarks began in 2004-2005, with the completion date scheduled for the late fall of 2005. The new resource will facilitate the placement of ESL

learners into appropriate language and literacy training programs. The Literacy Placement Tool was reviewed by ESL literacy assessors in order to prepare for a national validation process in May 2005. Assessors and literacy practitioners in ESL and LINC centres participated in the process, along with over one hundred literacy learners. These tools will identify learners whose observable skills and strategies reflect CLB Foundations and Phase 1 literacy competencies in a streamlined one-on-one assessment procedure. In response to needs expressed by practitioners, Phase 1 numeracy competencies can also be assessed.

Practitioners in multi-level classes will find the tool of particular value to identify what a new learner can do in English before beginning to target training to meet particular needs. The LPT facilitates improved referral opportunities to programs where the literacy benchmarks are used as a framework for training and evaluation. The LPT package includes a self-training guide, a standardized, scripted set of instructions for administering each task, a checklist of skills and strategies observed during the assessment, and a simple scoring methodology. Experienced practitioners and assessors can administer the LPT in a range of settings (e.g. classrooms, community-based programs, controlled intake assessment centers).

### **Strengthening Public Awareness & Image of the CLB**

The growing interest in the Canadian Language Benchmarks is a natural consequence of the evolution of the whole Canadian Language Benchmarks initiative. The benefits of the Canadian Language Benchmarks are increasingly recognized as a commonly understood and articulated national framework useful for describing a person's ability to accomplish particular tasks involving reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. The CCLB Board and staff worked hard to increase public awareness and image of the CLB.

### **New Vision, Mission and Strategic Outcomes:**

The Board of Directors identified the need to review and update the mission of the CCLB in response to the changing environment within which the CLB are being used nationally and internationally. A comprehensive strategic planning process resulted in the new vision, mission and strategic outcome statements, taking into account both what the CCLB has already accomplished, and needs to accomplish to meet its objectives.

### ***Endorsements for the national standards:***

The CCLB gathered numerous high profile endorsements regarding successful use of the CLB from national organizations including sector councils, regulatory and licensing bodies, postsecondary institutions. Testimonials were received from 22 organizations including:

- Canadian Nurses Association
- Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council
- Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council

***Participation at national and provincial conferences and forums:***

CCLB staff connected with the adult ESL and immigrant serving communities across the country at numerous national and provincial conferences through presentations, workshops and exhibits. A partial listing of events is listed below:

- Alberta Human Resources Conference
- Association of Canadian Community Colleges: Symposium on Immigrant Settlement Programs and Services in Canada's Colleges and Institutes
- ATESL Annual Conference
- Canadian Association of Prior Learning and Assessment
- Canadian Society of Training and Development
- Conference Board of Canada
- National Consultation on Career Development
- TESL Canada