

**A Qualitative Study of Stakeholder Experiences
With Adult High Schools and Literacy Programs**

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative, ethnographic case study was to compare the experiences of stakeholders connected to adult high schools and adult literacy programs in Manitoba, Canada. This is an important study, because it gathered information about providing educational services to adults who have dropped out of school. The researcher used stratified random sampling to select 16 adult education programs, and then used open sampling to recruit 86 stakeholders connected to these programs. She conducted face-to-face interviews with 86 volunteer participants: 47 staff members (directors/coordinators, teachers, other staff) and 39 students in 16 adult education programs funded by the Government of Manitoba: 6 Adult Learning Centres (ALCs, i.e., adult high schools), 8 adult literacy programs (LITs), and 2 combination ALC/LIT programs. The interview questions focused on the individual respondents' roles related to teaching and learning within their ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT program environments. Iterative open, axial, and selective coding converted the interview transcripts into sets of findings that made sense within a theoretical-conceptual framework grounded in Uri Bronfenbrenner's ecological paradigm. The following ecosystem components framed the research report: microsystem program types (ALC, LIT, ALC/LIT), mesosystem design elements (status, finances, hours, courses/subjects, intake), exosystem human elements (staff, instruction, students, student supports, atmosphere), and macrosystem factors beyond each program's control (government funders, community stakeholders, students' personal lives). The microsystem recommendations for practice focused on broadening government support to include additional adult education delivery models. The mesosystem recommendations focused on improving program funding, facilities, hours of operation, and course schedules. The exosystem recommendations focused on staff members' qualifications and salaries, students' academic and personal development, and program supports such as child care, food, and transportation. The macrosystem recommendations focused on accountability reports and connections with students' families and community service agencies. The recommendations for further research responded to the following research design limitations: only two adult education delivery models (and a third "combination" model), only two categories of stakeholders, only one means of data collection, and only one researcher. The report contains 5 figures, 25 tables, and an appendix of the interview questions.

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PART ONE BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

This report celebrates the services provided by government-funded adult high schools and literacy programs in Manitoba, Canada. As a past coordinator of adult education programs in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, I understand the essential role that alternative schooling plays in addressing the educational needs of adults who left school without finishing grade twelve. My research goal was to produce new knowledge about how provincially sponsored adult education providers respond to their target student populations.

Theoretical-Conceptual Framework: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Paradigm

Human experiences reflect who we are, what we do, and with whom we interact. Framing these experiences within an ecological paradigm underscores the interrelatedness of people and their physical, emotional, and cognitive behaviors as they occur in relation to specific environmental contexts. In this study, the primary contexts were 16 adult education programs. The individuals whose experiences comprised the focus for inquiry were staff and students connected to these programs.

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed his ecological paradigm as a way to explain human experiences as a function of nested systems of interpersonal relationships that occur within physical settings.¹ His Russian doll analogy illustrated the ecological model as concentric systems of progressively more distant environmental relationships, from micro to meso to exo to macrosystem levels (see Figure 1). The microsystem consists of face-to-face interactions. The mesosystem interconnects these face-to-face settings. Beyond the mesosystem is an exosystem of settings that have indirect influences. The outer macrosystem consists of the larger social and political culture, belief system, and lifestyle. Thus, Bronfenbrenner's inner "Russian doll" represents immediate settings, embedded in the next doll's intersections of these immediate settings, embedded in the next doll's indirect settings, embedded in the outer doll's cultural setting.

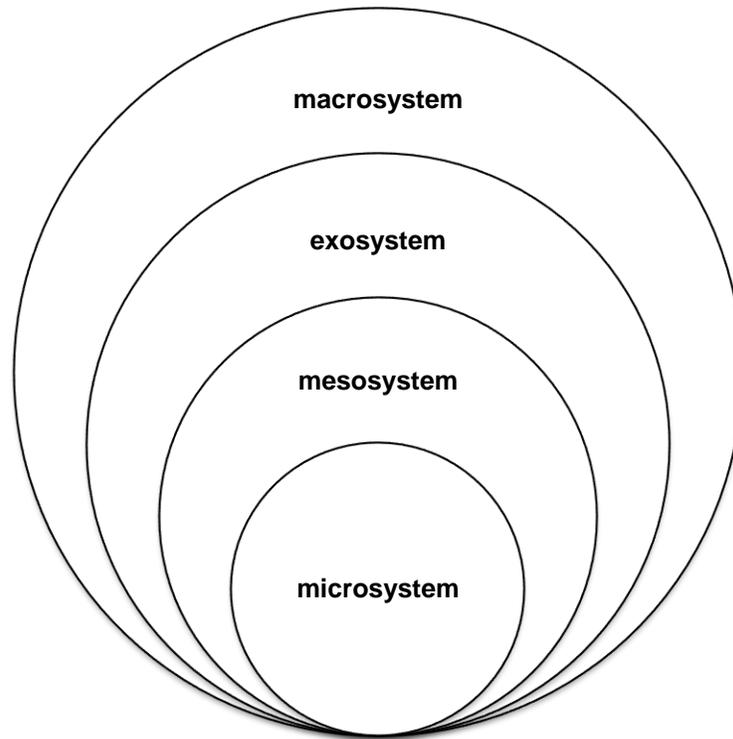
The ecological paradigm is an apt model for understanding the adult high schools and literacy programs in this study, because it celebrates individual experiences within nested systems of physical and interpersonal environmental contexts. The microsystem consists of three program types: Adult Learning Centres (i.e., adult high schools), adult literacy programs, and a combination of both. The mesosystem consists of the programs' core design elements (e.g., hours of operation). The exosystem consists of the human elements that translate these core designs into practice (e.g., teachers). The macrosystem consists of factors that are beyond the programs' control (e.g., students' personal lives). Because the ecological paradigm provides a framework for considering aspects of overlap and convergence among different micro, meso, exo, and macrosystems of experience, it also facilitated the cross-case comparisons that comprised an important part of this study's analytical processes.

Central to the ecological paradigm is the notion of roles. Roles dictate expectations for individual behaviors in interpersonal interactions. They define interpersonal settings and the transitions between settings. They thus outline the environmental forces that influence an individual's

¹ Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

realization of his/her potential. An important ecological focus for this study was therefore the roles that the participants assumed as stakeholders in their adult education programs, nested within their respective programs' micro, meso, exo, and macrosystem environments.

Figure 1. ADULT EDUCATION ECOSYSTEM



Methodology

This research was a qualitative inquiry of 16 adult education programs: 6 Adult Learning Centres (ALCs), 8 adult literacy programs (LITs), and 2 combination ALC/LITs. The study drew on ethnographic principles to examine the experiences of 47 staff and 39 students in these programs. Interviews comprised the data for conducting a detailed case study comparison, as approved by the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee and Assiniboine Community College Research Ethics Board. This is an important study, because it gathered information about providing educational services to adults who have dropped out of school.

Qualitative inquiry strives “to understand the subjective world of human experience” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 17).² The goal is to explicate how people come to understand situations, in order to convey their own meanings and perspectives. This report therefore endeavours to portray the research participants’ individual perceptions of their adult education programs and the effects these programs have had on their lives.

² Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Ethnographic Case Study

Ethnography is a qualitative paradigm that focuses on investigating and describing culture-sharing groups: their social behaviors, language, beliefs, and motivations (Creswell, 2017).³ It therefore endeavours to take all experiential factors into account, not some limited set of variables constrained by a narrow research question. The culture-sharing groups in this case study were the stakeholders associated with each of the research study's adult education programs. The research question – “What are stakeholders' experiences with provincially funded adult high schools and literacy programs in Manitoba?” – was broad enough to include a wide range of topics and issues that arose during the data collection process.

The defining feature of case study is its preoccupation with a single unit of human analysis: an individual person, or a group of people that share a definitive pattern of behavior – such as an organization or a culture (Miles & Huberman, 2014).⁴ A case is a system of patterned behavior that is conceptually, socially, physically, or temporally bounded. Multi-site studies examine multiple examples of a single case, researching in more than one location. Multi-case studies research more than one case. This case study was both multi-site and multi-case. It was multi-site because the research occurred in several communities for each program type, and it was multi-case not only because there were three types of programs but because the individual programs had developed somewhat differently in response to the expectations of their stakeholders.

Sampling

The target program population consisted of ALCs and LITs on a publicly available list of all provincially funded adult education programs in Manitoba, Canada. I used stratified random sampling to select 10 ALCs and 10 LITs from this list. Then I contacted each program in writing for permission to conduct the research onsite. Of the 8 ALCs that responded, 2 became the study's ALC/LITs because they provided provincially funded literacy services in addition to their high school courses. Of the 6 LITs that responded, one recommended that I contact 2 other LITs in the same city (i.e., snowball sampling) – and these LITs also became part of the research. The program sample was therefore 16 adult education programs in Manitoba: 6 ALCs, 8 LITs, and 2 ALC/LITs.

The programs' letters of permission identified specific people for me to contact: director or student adviser for each ALC, and coordinator for each LIT. I met these 16 individuals by appointment to discuss the research and procure their informed consent to participate. They became the key informants who helped me to recruit 31 other staff members and 39 students. The open sampling resulted in a total of 86 volunteer research participants: 32 from ALCs, 40 from LITs, and 14 from ALC/LITs.

³ Creswell, J. W., & Poh, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

⁴ Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Data Collection

One-to-one interviews provided the data for this research. I was particularly interested in finding out information that the key informants wanted to learn about their own – and the other – adult education programs. Therefore, these individuals helped me to develop the following interview questions from a list of potential topics approved during the ethics application process:

The interview times and locations were chosen in consultation with individual respondents. Staff member interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes. Student interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. A condition of the research participants' written informed consent was permission to audio-record their interviews. I transcribed every interview in order to create word-by-word text for analysis.

Data Analysis

I used qualitative data analysis procedures to examine the interview transcripts. Open coding identified the main ideas that the respondents raised. Then axial coding put these ideas into groups. Finally, selective coding put these groups into an order that made sense for developing the research report within a theoretical-conceptual framework grounded in Bronfenbrenner's ecological paradigm.

Limitations of the Research Design

The limitations of this study relate to its research context and its ethnographic case study approach to qualitative inquiry.

- The study was based on a limited number of adult education programs. Therefore, the program sample may not have been representative of other adult high schools and adult literacy programs – in Manitoba or elsewhere.
- The programs in this study represented only two adult education delivery models (plus a third “combination” model). Therefore, the participant sample may not have been representative of staff and students associated with other types of adult education programs, and it certainly was not representative of staff and students associated with Adult 12 programming in regular K-12 schools.
- The research participants consisted of staff and students only. Other program stakeholders may have added different information that would have broadened and enriched the data pool for analysis.
- The research design included the collection of data from one-to-one interviews only; there was no direct observation of the adult education programs in progress.
- The research design depended solely on qualitative inquiry; there was no quantitative survey to add to the data gathered through interviews.
- The research design included just one researcher, whose subjective positioning as a “senior” white female university professor would have affected the interviewer-respondent relationships.
- The researcher's cultural and experiential background, age, and gender would also have influenced the interpretations of the research data.

Terminology

The research report uses the following terms.

Ecological Paradigm

microsystem

face-to-face interactions – interpreted in this research as the core adult education program types: Adult Learning Centre (ALC), adult literacy program (LIT), and a combination ALC/LIT

mesosystem

interconnected face-to-face interactions – interpreted in this research as the programs' core design elements: status, finances, hours, courses/subjects, and intake

exosystem

indirect interactions – interpreted in this research as the human elements that translate the core program designs into practice: staff, instruction, students, student supports, and atmosphere

macrosystem

the larger social and political culture, belief system, and lifestyle – interpreted in this research as factors that are beyond each adult education program's control: government funders, community stakeholders, and students' personal lives

Program Classifications

alternative education

grade school level instruction not normally offered within regular schools (such as Adult Learning Centres and adult literacy programs)

Adult Learning Centre (ALC)

Manitoba's equivalent to an adult high school, offering grades 10-12 or 11-12 courses applicable toward the Mature Student High School Diploma

adult literacy program (LIT)

academic and personal interest programming designed for adults who require additional skills training (at a wide range of grade levels) to meet individual goals

community-based LIT

the adult literacy model preferred for funding by the Government of Manitoba, with local volunteer advisory boards and paid coordinators and instructors

ALC/LIT

a Manitoba adult education program that includes both adult high school and adult literacy programming

regular school

provincially accredited, public or private, grades K-12 schools

high school
grades 9-12, currently referred to as Senior I to IV in Manitoba

Course Accreditation

dual credit
pre-approved courses used for credit simultaneously in different adult education programs or institutions (e.g., Mature High School Diploma and community college trades)

Mature Student High School Diploma
Manitoba's "Adult 12" equivalent to a regular high school diploma, but requiring 8 Senior II to IV (grades 10-12) courses instead of the regular high school's 28 Senior I to IV (grades 9-12) courses

General Equivalency Diploma (GED)
Canadian standardized grades 10-12 equivalency system modelled after the American GED

Literacy Stages
a set of reading, writing, oral, and numeracy curricula developed in Manitoba for use with adult literacy program students

Teaching Methods

learner-centred instruction
tailored to the learning needs of individual students, according to their different goals and academic skill levels

teacher-centred instruction
lessons created by the teacher to meet specific curriculum goals

classroom-group instruction
large-group instruction, with everyone in the classroom participating in the same lesson

small-group instruction
instruction with a small group of students, while other students are engaged in different learning tasks in the same classroom

one-to-one instruction
individualized instruction with a single student, either alone or in a classroom setting

independent learning
learning done by oneself, whether onsite in a classroom setting or offsite at a place of one's own choosing (e.g., at home)

WebCT
technologically-assisted course materials available from the Government of Manitoba

Staff Classifications

ALC director

an adult high school's equivalent to the principal (often the "teaching principal") in a regular school

LIT coordinator

an adult literacy program's equivalent to the teaching principal in a regular school

teacher

instructor who has a teaching certificate from the Province of Manitoba – a requirement for ALC teaching staff

student adviser, life skills coach, career counselor

educator who has a teaching certificate (and may have other qualifications) from the Province of Manitoba – a requirement for ALC teaching staff

psychologist

professional who has graduate level qualifications in the specialty (and who may or may not also have a teaching certificate)

instructor

instructor who may or may not have a teaching certificate from the Province of Manitoba – common among LIT teaching staff

tutor

instructor who does not have a teaching certificate from the Province of Manitoba – more common in LITs than in ALCs

administrative assistant

secretarial and clerical support worker

Student Classifications

student

a generic term, often also used in reference to regular and adult high schools

learner

a generic term, often also used in reference to adult literacy and non-academic education

Government of Manitoba

Manitoba Education

the name of Manitoba's Department of Education at the time of this study

Adult Learning and Literacy (ALL)

the Manitoba Education branch responsible for adult high schools and literacy programs

Adult Learning Centre (ALC) grants

provincial funding to Manitoba's ALCs

Adult Literacy Program (ALP) grants
provincial funding to Manitoba's LITs

SUMMARY

Part One introduced the research by explaining its theoretical-conceptual framework, methodology, limitations, and terminology. Part Two uses Bronfenbrenner's ecological paradigm as a means to frame the findings.

PART TWO RESEARCH FINDINGS

This part of the research report uses Bronfenbrenner’s ecosystem model (see Figure 1, p. 2) as an organizational structure for reporting the research findings. The microsystem consists of the core program types: Adult Learning Centre (ALC), adult literacy program (LIT), and a combination ALC/LIT. The mesosystem consists of the programs’ core design elements: status, finances, hours, courses/subjects, and intake. The exosystem consists of the human elements that translate the core designs into practice: staff, instruction, students, student supports, and atmosphere. The macrosystem consists of factors that are beyond each program’s control: government funders, community stakeholders, and students’ personal lives.

The 16 adult education programs are not identified in this report. The tables contain number counts and overview summaries for each program type (as appropriate), instead of details that could identify individual programs. Pseudonyms are used to protect the participants’ identities.

The following sections report the findings that accrued from the research. Inherent are limitations of the research design and of the data collection and analysis processes. I am still committed to interviews as the best way to glean information from respondents, but I admit that as an outsider who was unfamiliar with the individual programs, I may have lacked the background knowledge to probe for pertinent program details. Furthermore, although I interviewed staff members from all 16 programs in the study, I interviewed students from only 11 of these programs. The “missing” students could have provided valuable information that would supplement the information from staff members. See Table 1 for a tally of the number of programs from which I interviewed respondents, divided into respondent categories. See Table 2 for the actual number of respondents per program type, totalling 86.

Table 1. NUMBER OF PROGRAMS WITH INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS

Program Type	Directors/ Coordinators	Teaching Staff (excluding Directors/ Coordinators)	Students	Student Support Workers	Administrative Assistant
ALC	5	5	4	1	-
LIT	8	8	5	-	-
ALC/LIT	2	2	2	1	1

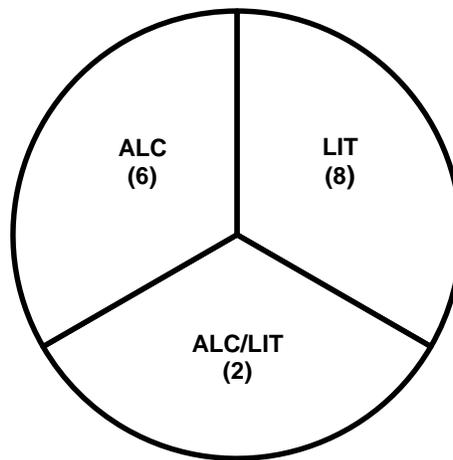
Table 2. NUMBER OF INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS IN EACH PROGRAM TYPE

Program Type	Directors/ Coordinators	Teaching Staff (excluding Directors/ Coordinators)	Students	Student Support Workers	Administrative Assistant
ALC	5	10	15	2	-
LIT	8	12	20	-	-
ALC/LIT	2	5	4	2	1

MICROSYSTEM

The microsystem consists of the core adult education program types in this research: Adult Learning Centre (ALC), Adult literacy program (LIT), and a combination ALC/LIT (see Figure 2). ALCs are adult high schools. They respond to students' needs for courses to complete a Mature Student High School Diploma (alternatively called an Adult 12), which requires eight course credits. The LITs in this research were all community-based adult literacy programs. These programs respond to students' individual needs for general literacy skills (reading, writing, math, computer skills), and more specific skills that may be required to meet education or employment goals. They may also offer GED test preparation. Additionally, LIT programs support students who are already enrolled in ALCs and post-secondary schools. ALC/LIT programs are a combination of the two types, providing both adult high school and more generalized literacy instruction. The current research involved stakeholders in 16 adult education programs: 6 ALCs, 8 LITs, and 2 ALC/LITs.

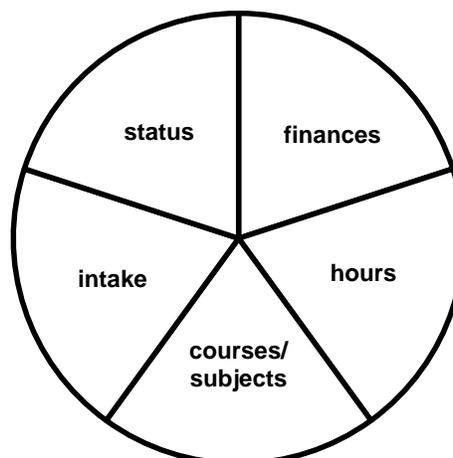
Figure 2. MICROSYSTEM



MESOSYSTEM

In this research, the mesosystem consists of each program's core design elements: status, finances, hours, courses/subjects, and intake (see Figure 3). These elements define the internal structure of the program.

Figure 3. MESOSYSTEM



Status

In this research, program status is interpreted as each program’s relative level of independence (see Table 3) and its location (see Table 4). Incorporated “stand-alone” programs are independent. They have their own administrative boards and rent their own facilities. They are responsible to their government funders. The less independent affiliated programs are responsible to their respective school divisions, post-secondary institutions, and non-profit agencies in addition to their government funders. Both types of programs may be housed in a variety of facilities, although affiliated programs normally operate in facilities owned by the affiliation organizations or institutions.

Table 3. NUMBER OF INCORPORATED VERSUS AFFILIATED PROGRAMS

Program Type	Incorporated (i.e., stand-alone)	Affiliated with a School Division	Affiliated with a Post-Secondary Institution	Affiliated with a Non-Profit Agency
ALC	1	2	3	-
LIT	4	1	-	3
ALC/LIT	1	1	-	-

Table 4. PROGRAM LOCATIONS

Program Type	Independent Facility	Public School	Post-Secondary Institution	Non-Profit Agency
ALC	2	1	3	-
LIT	1	2	-	5
ALC/LIT	1	1	-	-

ALC Programs. Of the six ALCs in this research, only one was incorporated. This program operated independently in a stand-alone facility that also housed community college programs. The other five ALCs were affiliated with school divisions and post-secondary institutions, and they operated either within these institutions or within buildings owned by these institutions. Two ALC directors reported difficulties with their programs’ school division facilities. Steve worked in an aging, minimally renovated industrial training space. He described the building as “a bit of an embarrassment. It looks like a computer graveyard. It looks like the recycling depot. The roof is in dire need of complete replacement. It’s old. It leaks.” Nevertheless, he added, “The building doesn’t seem to be deterring anyone. It could be that people are driving up and saying, ‘I don’t want to go here.’ But then they wouldn’t show up and we’d never know. The program is full.” Director Barbara also noted cosmetic issues with her school division facility, and the difficulty of accommodating physically challenged students in an older building that used to be an elementary school. Barbara had just one item for her wish list for change: “different facilities.” Nevertheless, she affirmed, “I don’t know why anybody would do it any other way” than to be affiliated with a school division.

Two of the four ALCs that operated in well-appointed facilities with modern classrooms posed difficulties for access by students who did not have independent transportation. These programs operated in out-of-the-way locations in communities that did not have public bus service. Staff in these programs noted the prohibitive costs of taxi fares for students. Student Eddie had a gap of several hours between his morning and evening classes, so he would travel back and forth to school twice each day (4 miles altogether). Despite nursing a broken foot, Eddie walked 2 miles instead of taking a taxi for both trips, because “cabs are expensive.”

Staff and students in the other four ALCs appreciated their facilities' convenient locations. Teacher Albert enjoyed working in the core area of his community: "You work where you work because you enjoy it, you understand it, and you appreciate it. You know you are making a difference. I would be working in the inner-city anyways, trying to make some of those stereotypes disappear." However, he and his program's director acknowledged the safety concerns that accompanied their program's core area location.

LIT Programs. Of the eight LIT programs in this research, four were incorporated and four were affiliated. Only one of the incorporated programs operated in a stand-alone facility, which coordinator Sheila identified as one of her program's best features, despite the high rent. The other three incorporated programs operated in elementary schools and a community service building at no charge, including janitorial services. Coordinators Martha and Nancy felt that their elementary school facilities were a nonthreatening way to acclimatize adult learners to a school setting, but coordinators Martha and Olive, and instructor Sally, also admitted the inconvenience of sharing office and classroom space in their facilities. Sally explained, "Sometimes our things get moved, but it is a free space so we can't really complain. Sometimes we have to cancel our class if someone else has a permit to use the space during the time."

The four affiliated LITs operated in community service agency buildings. Coordinator Crystal reported that her program's location was ideal because it was "an established place in the community. Our program name doesn't mean anything to anybody. But if I say we are at the [community service agency], everybody knows where that is, and they know it has a mandate to help people." Coordinator Molly described her program's community service location as "absolutely fantastic because it is not an institution, and a lot of Aboriginal people feel very, very comfortable coming here because of that." Coordinator Lyle noted that his program's location close to a soup kitchen and an ALC meant that students could enjoy free lunches and easily access literacy program assistance with their adult high school courses. All of the LITs in this study were centrally located, with public bus service (daytime-only in two communities). Two programs had initiated a "buddy" walking program so that evening students would not walk home or to the bus stop alone in their core area locations. Instructor Tammy said that her program had cancelled its evening classes altogether "because people didn't feel safe walking at night."

ALC/LIT Programs. One of the ALC/LIT programs in this research was incorporated and operated in its own rented facility. Teacher Dawn appreciated the autonomy of her program, but reported that the space was "crowded on the days that 20-25 students come to class." She also noted the difficulties that attended "the lack of lockers or storage for coats, book bags, etc." The central location of the program was ideal for students who lived close by, but difficult for other students because there was no public bus service.

The other ALC/LIT was affiliated with a school division and operated in an alternative 5-12 school that also housed a day care and community college courses. The director and other staff reported that the facility was attractive in appearance and in its location near the centre of town. Student Shawna had chosen to attend this program because it was closer to her home than the other ALC in the same community.

Finances

Two financial aspects emerged from the interviews: income and teachers' salaries and benefits.

Income

Grants from the provincial government are the primary source of income for Manitoba's ALC and LIT programs, but they are welcome to pursue supplemental avenues of funding if they wish. Incorporated programs receive their funding directly, and they manage their own program budgets (including authorizing expenses, setting teacher salaries, and writing cheques). Affiliated programs receive their funding indirectly through their affiliation institutions and organizations, which manage their budgets. Table 5 shows the sources of income for this study's adult education programs.

Table 5. INCOME

Program Type	Provincial Government	Federal Government	Community Grants	Student Tuition Fees	Fund Raising
ALC	6	1	-	4	-
LIT	8	1	3	0	4
ALC/LIT	2	-	-	0	-

ALC Programs. Only one of the ALCs in this research was incorporated. This program applied for additional funding from the Government of Canada and from another branch of the Government of Manitoba. The remaining five programs relied on their respective school divisions or post-secondary institutions to supplement their provincial grants as needed. For example, ALC director Steve said that his school division used the ALC funding to pay for staff and rent, and then provided everything else as "in-kind" donations: "books, equipment, supplies, photocopier, telephones, computers, IT services, etc." Director Barbara thought that a grant increase might pay for a move to a better facility for her affiliated program. The two school division ALC directors did not report collecting tuition fees, but the remaining stand-alone and community college ALCs charged per-course fees, some of which were recuperated from individual students' sponsors.

Only one ALC student mentioned program funding. ALC-W#53 said that the program needed more money "so we wouldn't have to do student fund raising. They make us sell things. We make bannock and stew, and sell it for lunches."

LIT Programs. Provincial government funding was significantly lower for the adult literacy programs than for the ALCs in this study. Because of the extra support from their affiliation organizations, only two LITs did not seek additional funding sources. The other six programs had various sources of supplemental income. Three programs actively pursued community grants, and one of these programs also applied for federal funding. However, the programs' coordinators quickly added that the grants were not renewable over the long term. Martha listed several grant sources that she had already exhausted in previous years. Three of the programs relied on fund-raising activities for extra income: selling sports tickets, selling home-made and commercial food products, hosting "Poor Boys" lunches, and holding neighborhood tag days. Coordinator Sheila explained, "We have to fund raise. There is no other way," but she also indicated, "Tag days are good for publicity, but they are also embarrassing. I don't see any other teachers standing on the corner, begging for money." Three of the incorporated LITs solicited food donations for their breakfast and snack food programs.

All but one LIT coordinator prioritized funding increases at the top of their “wish lists” for change. Most wanted to increase program hours and salaries (with benefits). Lyle wished to pay higher rent to his affiliation organization: “We should be paying \$3000-\$4000 a month instead of \$6000 a year.” He added, “The funding for literacy programs has no relationship with statistics. We know that low literacy levels have negative impacts that cost a great deal of money: crime, jail time, health issues, family problems. Clearly, our funders don’t get it.” Unlike college-based ALCs, LITs do not charge tuition fees. However, one LIT director reported receiving tuition fees from some of his students’ First Nation sponsors.

A few LIT students wished that their programs had enough money to hire more staff and stay open more hours. Jewel thought her program needed “an extra teacher or a volunteer teacher who’s retired, because the phone rings, people come in with donations, kids are running around – it’s hectic.” Valerie and Elsa wanted to come to class 2-3 more evenings per week, and Elsa wanted longer evening classes. Ann wished that she could come to the program during the summer. Deanna listed as one of her program’s best features “that you don’t have to pay for the education.”

ALC/LIT Programs. The ALC/LIT programs in this research received both ALC and adult literacy program funding from the provincial government. Neither program charged fees to students, but both received tuition fees from individual students’ sponsors. Both programs also sought supplemental funding from other sources. The incorporated ALC/LIT was responsible for its own expenses: rent, supplies, salaries, etc. This program’s teacher Dawn wished for money to improve her program’s facility and equipment, and to take students on field trips: “For example, when my grade 12s were doing *Dry Lips Move to Kapuskasing*, it would have been wonderful to take them to the play at the University of Manitoba.” The affiliated ALC/LIT received additional support from its school division, and was housed in a well-appointed school inside that division. Nevertheless, this program’s tutor Julie expressed a wish for more funding: “I don’t think there’s ever going to be a point where it’s not needed.”

Salaries and Benefits

Teachers’ salaries and benefits are the main expense in adult education programs. Table 6 divides this study’s salaries and benefits into the following categories: whether set by the affiliated institution or by the program itself, whether Christmas and spring break weeks are paid, and whether the teachers receive medical benefits.

Table 6. SALARIES AND BENEFITS FOR TEACHING STAFF

Program Type	Salaries Set by the Affiliated School Division or Post-Secondary Institution	Salaries Set by the Incorporated Adult Education Program	Paid Weeks Off at Christmas and Spring Break	Medical Benefits
ALC	5	1	5	5
LIT	-	8	-	-
ALC/LIT	1	1	1	1

ALC Programs. The ALCs’ incorporated-versus-affiliated status affected their staff salaries. The one ALC set its own salary scales, which did not include benefits. Kathy and Lisa wished for a grant increase to raise this program’s salaries, with benefits. Director Kathy said, “It would be nice to raise the teachers’ salaries, because they put in longer days than regular school teachers.” Staff in the five affiliated ALCs were paid according to their school divisions’ or post-secondary institutions’ salary scales, including benefits. Several ALC teachers expressed surprise that I would even ask about the origins of their salary scales. Larry reflected the common sentiment, “I can’t imagine it any other way. I’m a teacher, so I should be paid like a teacher.”

LIT Programs. Staff salaries were a visible difference between ALC and LIT program finances. The wages for certified LIT teachers in this study ranged from \$15 to \$35 per hour, without benefits. Most teachers at the higher end of this range worked significantly fewer hours per week. Coordinator Nancy noted, “Our salaries are set at about a third of the salaries that the Adult Learning Centres are making, if the teachers are connected to a school division.” Coordinator Martha reported that her salary had increased only \$5 per hour (from \$25 to \$30) over the course of 20 years, and that the salary of one of her certified teachers had increased only \$1 per hour (from \$25 to \$26) over the course of 10 years. Coordinator Sheila suggested “a minimum of \$15 per hour with a wage scale, based on experience and expertise, similar to the public school system.”

ALC/LIT Programs. Salaries for the incorporated ALC/LIT were on a set scale, albeit a lower scale than the affiliated ALC/LIT, and they included no benefits. Neither program’s research participants commented on their wages, but the incorporated program’s teacher Dawn reported having reduced her paid days from five to four per week, “because I have quite a heavy marking load, and I would rather do that marking on my own time on Mondays, to free up my weekends.”

Hours

Adult education program hours depend on several factors: program funding, facility availability, staff willingness, and students’ availability. ALCs are more likely to operate full-time, because their provincial grants are more generous than LIT program grants. To compensate for their lower hours, LITs are more likely to pay staff for extra “administration” or “preparation” time. The focus for this research was on the hours that each program was open to students (see Table 7).

Table 7. HOURS OPEN TO STUDENTS EACH WEEK

Program Type	under 10	10-14	20-24	25-29	over 29	Hours include 2 evenings.	Hours include 4 evenings.
ALC	1	-	-	1	4	2	2
LIT	2	1	2	1	2	5	-
ALC/LIT	-	-	-	1	1	1	-

There is no “15-19” hours column, because no programs were open 15-19 hours a week.

ALC Programs. Of the six ALCs in this research, five were open to students at least 25 hours a week. Their teachers were full-time employees, most of whom took turns teaching in the evenings. Only two programs did not have evening hours: one because not enough students registered when the program tried to offer evening classes, and the other because the program’s core area location was not safe at night. The remaining program was open only Tuesday and Thursday evenings because it was an assigned portion of the teaching director’s

full-time high school teaching position. In exchange for dedicating two evenings a week to her ALC students, Barbara received Friday afternoons off.

Only one daytime ALC started classes at 8:30 a.m. instead of at 9:00 a.m. Teachers Larry and Ken defended their early start time despite students' difficulties in getting to the ALC on the outskirts of a community without public transportation – and in which schools did not permit children to arrive before 8:30. These teachers lived in other rural communities, and they liked starting work early so that they could drive home earlier at the end of the day. Both said that starting early was good training for when the students had jobs, later, and both made allowances for students who came late to class. Larry explained, "Getting here at 8:30 a.m. is character building. It's preparing them for their future workforce." Ken added, "If we changed the start time to 9:00, they'd probably still come late." Ken said that he did review work at the beginning of each class so that tardy students wouldn't miss any "real instruction." However, student adviser Janice wished that she could convince these teachers to support a change of hours: "If we just changed our start time to 9:00, the students wouldn't have to walk in late."

ALC students had both positive and negative reactions to their programs' hours. Carla appreciated the opportunity to split her evening courses between the two ALCs in her community, "because my husband works during the daytime, and we don't have a reliable sitter." Ruth wished that her program would start at 9:00 a.m. instead of 8:30 a.m.: "I wish they would change the time to start classes in the morning. I'm always late because I leave home at 8:30 when my kids do, so they aren't leaving too early when there is no supervision in school."

LIT Programs. Of the LIT programs in this research, three were open to students at least 25 hours a week. Two of these programs had full-time instructors who worked daytime hours only; the other had a full-time instructor who also took turns with her coordinator in the evenings. Only one of the remaining LITs had a daytime-only instructor. This program was open three mornings a week. Its evening hours had been discontinued because of students' fear for their safety in the program's core area location. Three other part-time programs split their hours between daytime and evening hours, with the teaching coordinators working all time slots and different staff members taking turns in the daytime and evening slots. Two of these programs were open 8 and 11 hours a week, respectively, and the other program was open 20 hours a week. Four LIT programs planned to remain open during the summer (budget permitting): two programs each hoped to access funding for 2 afternoons per week for 6 weeks, and another program expected to be open 4 days per week for 10 weeks. The fourth program was in the initial stages of asking for funding to remain open full-time year-round, with just a 2-3 week break in summer.

Several LIT students expressed sincere commitments to attending as many hours as they could. Valerie, Elsa, and Ann wished that their programs could be open more hours. Valerie wanted her program to be open two more evenings per week, and Elsa wanted the same program to be open three more evenings per week, four hours at a time: "That extra hour would make a big difference. The teachers can't get around to everybody in three hours. If we could get a permit to be open five evenings a week, they'd have time to get around to everyone." Ann wanted her literacy program to stay open all year long, instead of closing for the summer months.

ALC/LIT Programs. Both ALC/LIT programs were open to students at least 25 hours a week. Some of the school-affiliated program's teachers took turns teaching in the evenings. None of the staff members or students commented on their programs' hours.

Courses/Subjects

ALC programs offer courses for their students to complete the Mature Student High School Diploma (Adult 12). LIT programs offer general literacy skills development (which may use literacy Stages curricula), Grade Equivalency Diploma (GED) test preparation, and specific skills instruction in response to individual students' needs. ALC/LIT programs offer both types of adult education service. Table 8 provides an overall summary of the courses/subjects in this research study's programs.

Table 8. COURSES/SUBJECTS

Program Type	Adult High School Courses Grade 10	Adult High School Courses Grades 11-12	Adult Literacy Stages	Adult Literacy General Subjects	Grade Equivalency Diploma (GED)
ALC	5	6	-	3	-
LIT	-	-	4	8	5
ALC/LIT	1	2	2	1	1

ALC Programs. Manitoba's Mature Student High School Diploma requires the completion of 8 courses, including 3 at the grade 12 level: English, math, and an elective.⁵ The six ALCs in this study were mandated to provide Adult 12 programming to their students, but the configurations of subject areas and grade levels differed based on the needs of their students and the expertise of their teachers. Five ALCs offered grades 10-12 courses, and one offered grades 11-12 courses only. In response to local employer requirements, two ALCs offered grades 10-12 pre-calculus math and grades 11-12 chemistry and physics. The other four ALCs offered more generalized courses, including transactional and technical English, consumer math, biology, law, career development, Aboriginal studies, life skills, world issues, and computer systems. One ALC offered dual credit programming with a university and community college. This ALC also offered an apprenticeship Adult 12, with 5 apprenticeship credits "on the job." Another ALC partnered with the local high school to give its students the opportunity to complete 30 high school credits to earn "regular" high school certification instead of Adult 12 certification. Three ALCs offered Web-CT courses with teacher support, in order to accommodate more courses without adding staff and program hours.

The focus of all ALCs was to fill the gaps in their students' high school transcripts, in order to complete the Mature High School Diploma in a timely manner. Director Barbara explained, "For most adults, it's not the lifelong learning kind of thing. They need the credit. They want it and they want out. We don't do the frills that they do at high school, where they need the life experience."

At the time of data collection, the ALC students were taking a variety of high school courses, at various stages of Mature Student High School Diploma completion. Several expressed appreciation for the range of courses available in their ALCs. For example, Dean listed as the best program features "math and English and everything else. It's all relevant to something. Math is not just teaching numbers." Only one ALC student indicated a desire to take courses that were not available: Iris wished that there were more computer courses to prepare for

⁵ Manitoba Education and Youth, Manitoba Advanced Education and Training. (2003). *Senior 1 to senior 4 mature student graduation requirements (2003)*. Winnipeg, MB: Author.

clerical employment. Eddie wished that he could take trades courses instead of business courses, but the business courses were a stipulation of his Workers' Compensation sponsorship, not a "default" choice dictated by the ALC's roster of courses.

LIT Programs. The eight LIT programs offered basic skills development in reading, writing and math. Five LITs expanded this core instruction to include GED test preparation, and all but one LIT offered specialized instruction to meet individual students' employment and personal needs: computer skills, resume writing, reading drivers' and mechanics' manuals, etc. Although all LIT programs were strongly encouraged to use the Stages curricula developed by the Adult Learning and Literacy (ALL) branch of Manitoba Education, only four of the LITs in this study used Stages as a foundation for instruction. These four programs found Stages useful in planning individualized literacy instruction in programs that catered to a wide variety of student needs, but the other four LITs preferred their own teacher-made curricula and support materials. Two LIT coordinators were particularly vocal about their reluctance to use the Stages curricula. Sheila reported using Stages on government reports "because we have to," but she added that the one person who completed Stage Two in the program "took over two years to do it. The binder was that thick, with all the exercises. Stages demands a lot, especially when people are missing things in their literacy development." Lyle objected, "We've always been a feeder program for the adult collegiate and they don't value it. They can give a literacy credit for having been here. They can get documentation from me, but it's not Stages."

The LIT students reported working on a range of subject areas at various academic levels, including general literacy (reading, writing, and numeracy), GED preparation, class 4 and class 5 driver education test preparation, computer literacy, ALC course tutoring, and post-secondary correspondence course support. Charlie laughed, "I've never done so much reading in my life." Greg said, "Reading comprehension. Sometimes it's very hard to understand, especially a foot-long roll of words, where you've got to look them up in the dictionary until you understand them." Ann explained, "Some of the math I never did because I quit school when I was 16 years old. I'm 42 now, so that is pretty long, but I find it so amazing learning new things like algebra. That's one thing I thought I'd never do, and fractions."

ALC/LIT Programs. By program classification, ALC/LITs offer a combination of ALC and literacy instruction. The incorporated ALC/LIT had started as a LIT program and then added the ALC several years later. This program offered GED preparation, general literacy, and Stages 1-3 in addition to grades 10-12 courses that included math, English, biology, geography, world history, Aboriginal perspectives, computer skills, law, family studies, life-work transitioning, photo-shop, and drafting. The school-affiliated ALC/LIT had started as an ALC and then added the LIT program a few years later. This program offered Stages 2-3 in addition to grades 10-12 courses that included math, English, biology, world history, Native studies, computer skills, law, psychology, career development, and various Web-CT courses. The school-affiliated ALC/LIT students could also take courses at the onsite alternative high school, in order to complete 30 credits to earn a "regular" high school diploma instead of an Adult 12 diploma.

Instructional staff in both ALC/LIT programs credited the combination programming for their program's success. The affiliated program's teacher Dawn gave as a best program feature "mixing everybody together: ALC and literacy, different courses. There might be a literacy person that knows something on the computer that a person doing the high school credits doesn't know. They help each other, both ways." The other ALC/LIT program's teacher Glenn happily reported, "Our whole philosophy is being a hybrid between an adult high school and adult literacy program."

One ALC/LIT-KSD student expressed appreciation for having participated in the Stages literacy program before taking high school courses. Shawna said, “At first I was disappointed, but now I’m happy I did upgrading. I’m doing better than students who went right into grade 11, and I think it’s because of the upgrading. I’m not afraid to go into university now.”

Intake

Program intake procedures vary among ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT programs – and also between individual programs in these categories. The following intake factors featured prominently in this research: recruitment, intake schedules, and enrolment procedures.

Recruitment

This study’s ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT programs used various strategies to recruit students. Table 9 shows the types of recruitment reported for each category: word of mouth, personal referrals, agency referrals, posters/flyers, and fund raising. Word of mouth depended on the program’s reputation in the community. Personal referrals from past program participants, friends, and relatives augmented professional referrals from social service and employment agencies.

Table 9. RECRUITMENT

Program Type	Community Word of Mouth	Personal Referrals	Community Agency Referrals	Career Fairs, Posters, Flyers, etc.	Fund Raising Publicity
ALC	yes	yes	yes	yes	-
LIT	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
ALC/LIT	yes	yes	yes	-	-

ALC Programs. The six ALCs in this study had full class complements of students, primarily due to community word of mouth and agency referrals. All were well known as the adult alternative to their local high schools. Adults who inquired about completing their grade 12 diplomas in high school were usually referred to an ALC instead, especially when their transcripts had significant gaps in grades 11-12. Director Steve’s statement “We don’t need to recruit” was a repeated refrain in the research transcripts. Despite her program’s full classes, student adviser Janice, who belonged to the only ALC that participated in various career fairs, wished that she could reach lower income residents in her catchment area: “It’s that group that we have the hardest time connecting with. We can put ads in the paper, but not everyone reads the paper. We put flyers out in the grocery stores, because everybody has to buy food.”

This study’s 10 rural and northern ALC students knew about their communities’ ALCs before they decided to complete the Mature Adult High School Diploma; 2 reported being referred by Workers’ Compensation and Employment Services. Eddie admitted that he was “kind of sorry” that he had asked Workers’ Compensation to sponsor him for retraining, “because they liked the idea” and he was now obligated to complete a business administration diploma as part of his career path change after an on-the-job accident as an electrician. The 5 urban ALC students knew that adult high schools existed in central Winnipeg, but only 2 came to this study’s ALC first. Of the remaining 3 students, 2 had been referred by other ALCs in the community and 1 had been referred by a friend in the program. A particular appeal for several urban ALC students was the opportunity to merge their Adult 12 courses with an apprenticeship.

LIT Programs. In addition to the other recruitment strategies common to ALC and LIT programs, two LITs relied on fund raising as a means to publicize their services. One northern Manitoba program held “tag day” fund-raisers twice a year on Main Street, and one western Manitoba program held periodic hot dog sales at a local department store. Of the eight LITs in this study, two maintained student waiting lists for full-time attendance; the other six programs accommodated all applicants by means of individualized part-time scheduling. Only one LIT was under-attended, despite its recruitment efforts: community news ads on TV and radio, posters, networking meetings with community agencies, mental health and wellness events, referrals from other LITs, etc. This LIT’s instructor Bonnie asked, “How much more can we do? We’re obviously not doing something right, but what is the answer?” Word of mouth was the most common recruitment strategy reported by all of the LITs’ staff members, followed closely by referrals from friends (who were often also program students) and social service agencies.

Although all but one LIT was running at (or above) full capacity at the time of the study, staff members attached to three programs worried that they were missing pockets of potential students in their communities. Instructor Twyla said, “We’re busy, but I don’t understand why more people don’t use our program. I mean, it’s free.” Computer instructor Harold reported, “Our community has a lot of immigrants, but we don’t see many immigrants here. Many of them need grade 12 or literacy skills, computers, math, and all that.” Coordinator Lyle added, “There are loads of people who need to come to school but we don’t see. And there’s no mileage in advertising significantly, because if all those people suddenly showed up, we don’t have the capacity to serve them anyway.”

LITs tend to have a lower community profile than ALCs, but general word of mouth brings more LIT than ALC students back to school. Friends and relatives played a significant role in encouraging several of this study’s LIT students to continue their education. Ivy explained, “I didn’t even know about the program until [my friend] told me about it. She used to come here. I went to another program before, and it didn’t work out. But I feel like I belong in this program.” Other students reported being referred by ALCs, community colleges, social workers, and employment counselors. Greg said, “My social worker was very demanding. If I don’t take some sort of program, I’m history. She said, ‘You have to do something to stay on. You need to get a job, instead of making up excuses anymore.’” The eight students from three inner city LITs gave special credit to their programs’ coordinators for welcoming them into their LIT programs right from their first queries by telephone call.

ALC/LIT Programs. The two ALC/LITs relied on word of mouth, personal referrals, and agency referrals as their primary recruitment strategies. Director Joyce spoke of garnering publicity from monthly inter-agency meetings and general word of mouth. She added, “We are pretty prominent in the community. Obviously, we haven’t met the needs of all adults, but I think that we are prominent enough that learners who are interested in coming do come.” Teacher Dawn from the same program admitted that it sometimes took two to three visits before a student joined the program. Director Theresa credited her program’s location for attracting “people off the street because we are close to the hospital and women’s shelter.”

Only one of the four ALC/LIT students in this study had sought out the program on her own. The others had very specific referrals from other academic institutions or from friends and family, some of whom were prior ALC/LIT students. Alice explained, “My daughter invited me to coffee and tea day. A teacher asked, ‘Have you ever thought of going back to school? You’re never too old to go to school.’ Later I thought, “Oh, why not give it a heck?”

Intake Schedules

Intake schedules dictate a program's accessibility to students. Adult education programs with individualized instruction accept new students whenever they arrive, on a continuous entry schedule. Programs that have more conventional class structures accept students one, two, three, or four times a year, in accordance with pre-determined course schedules. Figure 10 depicts the intake schedules of the ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT programs in this study.

Table 10. INTAKE SCHEDULES

Program Type	Continuous	Once a Year	Twice a Year	Three Times a Year	Four times a Year
ALC	-	2	3	-	1
LIT	8	-	-	-	
ALC/LIT	1	-	-	1	

ALC Programs. None of the ALCs accepted students on a continuous entry schedule. For all but one ALC, the intake schedule reflected each program's semester system: one, two, or four semesters per year. The remaining ALC had just one intake in September, although its courses ran on a two-semester schedule. This program's director reported, "We cut the class size off at 18 people each fall." The other five ALCs admitted new students every semester, class space permitting. Student adviser Janice spoke highly of the local high school's previously modularized Adult 12 program, "where a mature student could step in, do a couple of modules, walk away for two weeks, and then come back" – but she did not suggest that this continuous intake model would work in her ALC. Janice did, however, recommend changing the intake dates from September 1 to October 1, and from January 1 to February 1, in order to accommodate students' needs to "settle down" before coming to school each term.

Only one ALC student spoke of her program's entry schedule. Carla reported splitting her course load between two ALCs because she had missed one program's intake deadline.

LIT Programs. The eight LITs in this study operated on a continuous entry basis. New students contacted the program coordinator either in person or by phone to arrange an intake interview. The continuous intake accommodated both the students' personal schedules and the coordinators' needs to assess their skills and make individualized learning plans. Coordinators scheduled student attendance on a part-time basis as needed to ensure that no students were excluded. Only four of the LIT programs in this study operated full time, so "part time" could mean attending just two of the four evenings that a program was open each week. This way, part-time programs could accommodate 30-40 students in a classroom with only 20 chairs. The LIT research participants did not comment further on their intake schedules.

ALC/LIT Programs. One ALC had a continuous entry schedule, and the other ALC accepted new students three times a year. The coordinators of both programs spoke of meeting new students individually to set short and long-term goals, but they did not connect these entry interviews to their programs' intake schedules. Other staff and students made no comments.

Enrolment Procedures

Individual ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT programs lie at different positions on the continuum from formal to informal enrolment. High school transcripts, standardized tests, less formal assessments, interviews, and facility tours typify these procedures, as indicated in Table 11.

Table 11. ENROLMENT PROCEDURES

Program Type	High School Transcripts	Standardized Tests	Less Formal Testing	Interview Conversation	Tour of the Facility
ALC	5	5	-	3	1
LIT	-	5	4	8	1
ALC/LIT	2	1	-	2	1

ALC Programs. Because ALCs fill gaps in students’ high school courses in order to confer the Mature High School Diploma, they normally require high school transcripts. Of the six ALCs in this study, two also required CAAT (Canadian Adult Achievement Test) results, two accepted CAAT-D results in lieu of high school transcripts, and one required ABLE (Adult Basic Learning Examination) results instead of high school transcripts. Standardized testing schedules coincided with the programs’ intake schedules. Director Kathy said, “They’d have to do pretty poorly on the ABLE before we would turn them away because of their marks. They’re not allowed to use a calculator on the test, but if we give them a calculator they’ll be fine.”

Kathy also wanted new students “to be settled and stable in the community for at least 10 months to a year,” especially “if they just got out of addictions treatment or the justice system.” In addition to the ABLE intake test, this ALC required an extensive written application (with an autobiography and reference letters), and an interview. Of the three ALCs that reported conducting intake interviews, Kathy was the only director who emphasized the interview’s role in enrolment: “We need to confirm their commitment to the cultural aspect of the program. We reject learners who aren’t ready.” Her student Iris affirmed, “The application is a long process – biography, references, etc. You have to be serious.” Kathy was also the only ALC director who reported including a facility tour in the enrolment process.

LIT Programs. The eight LITs also relied on initial academic skills assessments. Three programs conducted ABLE levels 1 and 2, and one program conducted CAAT-B tests, for students with general literacy skills needs. Two programs also accepted CAAT results for students who had been referred by their local ALCs. Four LIT coordinators described their informal skills assessment procedures: short reading and math inventories, writing samples, etc. Intake interviews dominated all eight LITs’ enrolment procedures, intended to make the students feel comfortable and confirm initial learning goals and attendance schedules. Coordinator Olive reported, “I always make sure that people feel comfortable coming in. They’ve got the courage to take the first steps, so we have to help them out.” Sheila added, “We set a learning plan, and then adjust as we go.” Maria was the only LIT coordinator who reported including a facility tour as part of the enrolment process, as a way to ascertain “how they feel about learning in this environment.”

Similarly to ALC director Kathy, LIT coordinator Lyle reported focusing on each student’s lifestyle stability during the intake interview. He said, “You can waste a lot of time if they don’t have a secure place to live and source of income. If they’re on income assistance, we ask to have their worker confirm that it’s okay for them to be here.”

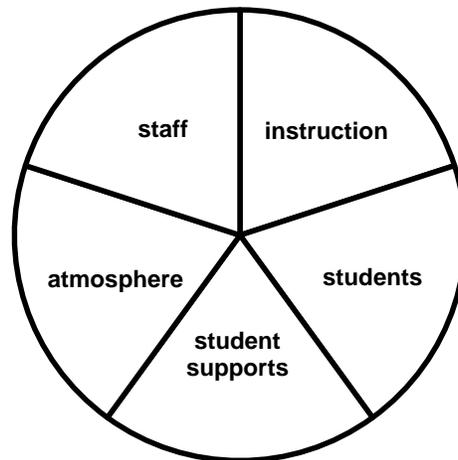
ALC/LIT Programs. The two ALC/LITs in this study required high school transcripts. In addition, director Theresa used CTBS (Canadian Tests of Basic Skills) to assess the students’ mathematics and English language arts (ELA) skills. Theresa explained, “They get that information so only they and their instructors know if they’re coming in at a grade 8 level even though they’re in grade 11. We do that three times in their program, so they see the level grow.” Theresa also reported conducting facility tours as a formal part of the intake process.

The ALC/LITs also conducted intensive intake interviews to acclimatize students to the program and set short and long-term goals. Director Theresa explained, “They have to decide their goal. They do small objectives, based on Monday to Friday, such as ‘I will not drink Monday to Friday.’ They are simple, but it’s easier to track progress when it’s driven by the student.”

EXOSYSTEM

The exosystem consists of the human elements that translate the core designs into practice: staff, instruction, students, student supports, and atmosphere (see Figure 4). Staff members consist of paid and unpaid administrative, teaching, and clerical positions. The 44 staff members who participated in this study were all paid employees: 6 administrators who did not also teach, 9 administrators who also taught, 26 other instructors, and 5 people in other positions (2 of whom also taught). The notable elements of instruction were the scheduled/ unscheduled classes, teaching method, and classroom resources. Data gathered about and from the 37 students focused on their goals, changes in goals, other changes, and learning issues. Programs in the study reported the following student supports: transportation, child care, student support workers, food, GED fees, emergency funding, and food banks. Notable atmospheric aspects were the adult learning community, interpersonal relationships, validation, safe place, and homey climate that students experienced in their adult education programs.

Figure 4. EXOSYSTEM



Staff

Staffing varies among ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT programs, partly because of the nature of the programming and mostly because of the disparate levels of program funding. When exclusively administrative positions are disregarded, the following staff categories defined the programs in this research: teaching positions and other positions on site.

Teaching Positions

The research programs’ teaching staff belonged to the following classifications: teaching directors/coordinators, certified teachers, uncertified instructors/tutors, and volunteer tutors. The number of people in each category is given by program type in Table 12.

Table 12. TEACHING POSITIONS

Program Type	Director/ Coordinator Who Teaches	1 Certified Teacher	2 + Certified Teachers	1 Uncertified Instructor/ Tutor	2 + Uncertified Instructors/ Tutors	1 + Volunteer Tutors
ALC	2	-	5	1	-	-
LIT	7	3	4	2	4	2
ALC/LIT	1	-	2	2	-	-

ALC Programs. By virtue of their status as adult high schools, ALCs are obliged to hire certified teachers, including any directors who also teach. Of the six ALCs in this study, one director was also the only teacher in the program, one director taught with 2 teachers, one program had a nonteaching director and 2 teachers, and the other three programs had nonteaching directors and more than 2 teachers each. In addition to its 2 certified teachers, ALC-1 paid peer tutors and hired a half-time tutor for grade 12 math and English.

All of the ALC teachers and teaching directors worked full time. Two programs had full-time ALC teachers, but two other programs' teachers divided their time between ALC and community college courses. Director Barbara was a full-time regular high school teacher who received one afternoon off per week in lieu of her teaching director services two evenings a week.

All but one ALC teacher were subject specialists, as opposed to generalists who taught a wide range of subjects. As is common in other high schools, the teachers tended to teach either math/science or English/social science (social studies, psychology, etc.). Because teaching director Barbara was the only teacher in her part-time ALC, she was, by necessity, a generalist.

LIT Programs. Manitoba's adult literacy programs are not obliged to hire certified teachers, but most do despite the significantly lower wages. This study's eight LIT coordinators were certified teachers, all but one of whom also taught. Only one program had only an uncertified instructor working with her program's coordinator; the other seven programs hired certified teachers in addition to their coordinators. Uncertified instructors/tutors provided additional teaching support in six LIT programs (at decidedly lower wages), and volunteer tutors provided extra assistance in two of these programs. Coordinator Molly described her volunteers as "absolutely essential."

Of the eight LITs in this study, three employed only full-time teaching staff, one employed both full-time and part-time teaching staff, and four employed only part-time teaching staff with hours per week ranging from 3 to 20.

All but one of the LIT coordinators were generalist instructors, responsible for math, ELA, and whatever other literacy needs their students presented. The one specialist coordinator taught math and hired a certified teacher to teach English language arts (ELA) in the daytime program and another certified teacher to teach both subjects in the evening. The certified teachers in three programs were specialists in either math or ELA. The remaining LIT programs' teaching staff were generalists.

ALC/LIT Programs. The two ALC/LIT directors were certified teachers, one of whom also taught one high school subject. ALC/LITs are obliged to hire certified teachers for their high school courses; the ALC/LITs in this study also hired certified teachers for their literacy program delivery. An uncertified tutor was also paid to provide additional support in each program.

Both ALC/LITs were full-time programs, with full-time teaching staff. These certified teachers were subject area specialists in math/science or English/social science.

Other Positions On Site

The programs' other onsite positions belonged to the following classifications: support worker, intake coordinator, secretary/administrative assistant, child care worker, and volunteer receptionist. These individuals either belonged to the adult education program or were available elsewhere in the same building. Table 13 depicts the number of position categories by program.

Table 13. OTHER POSITIONS ON SITE

Program Type	Student Support Worker	Intake Coordinator	Secretary/Administrative Assistant	Child Care Worker	Volunteer Receptionist
ALC	5	1	4	1	-
LIT	2	-	-	2	1
ALC/LIT	1	-	2	1	-

ALC Programs. Because of their tendency to operate within larger educational institutions, ALCs often have onsite nonteaching staff. Of this study's six ALCs, four had their own secretaries/administrative assistants. One had its own half-time intake coordinator/secretary and access to counselors provided by its host high school. Three ALCs also had access to personal counselors and academic advisers provided by their host community colleges. In addition, one of these ALCs had access to onsite child care. Another ALC had its own counselor who also served as a life skills coach, in addition to sharing an onsite full-time receptionist, administrative assistant, and intake coordinator with community college programs in the same building.

When asked about their ALCs' best features, several staff members identified nonteaching services. Student adviser Janice quickly responded, "onsite daycare." Directors Karen and Kaye listed services provided by their programs' community college hosts: library, counseling, Aboriginal Centre, computer lab, and technical support. Director Kathy and teacher Lisa noted their program's counseling and life skills services, particularly in relation to its focus on cultural identity. Kathy explained, "Without those life skills, you can't get a student to be confident enough to pick up a pen, or touch a keyboard, or walk in front of a class and talk." Lisa added, "The life skills piece teaches them problem-solving. They always say that it shifts their perspective and their way of dealing with things in their life."

ALC students also noted nonteaching services as their programs' best features. Jeff declared, "The counselors here are excellent." Student Jack happily reported that his program's counselor "wanted me to talk to her before I quit last time." Russell, Iris, and June praised the cultural aspects of their program's life skills support. June explained, "They are very good tools when you're ready to change your life."

LIT Programs. Due to their primarily independent status and limited finances, most LIT programs do not have onsite nonteaching staff. Of the eight LITs in this study, only two programs had access to onsite counseling services, offered by their non-profit agency hosts. As well, one of these programs had volunteers who took turns as the receptionist four days a week. Two other programs each had a tutor who also provided child care services as needed.

When asked about their programs' best features, three LIT coordinators identified free facilities, including janitorial services. Coordinators Martha, Nancy, and Olive noted the effect that these nonteaching services had on their part-time programs' limited budgets. Student Hope identified her program's "strong social support system – the women's counselor and children's counselor" as its best feature.

ALC/LIT Programs. Both ALC/LITS had onsite secretaries/administrative assistants. One also had access to onsite child care and to its school division's psychologist (for academic and psychological testing, learning disabilities assessment, crisis and other personal counseling). Director Theresa identified child care as one of her program's best features.

In addition to her program's existing nonteaching staff, administrative assistant Shelley wished to have more clerical support and onsite counseling and resource teacher services. School psychologist Marilyn was extremely aware of the unique nature of her services to ALC/LIT students. She insisted, "Clinical services should be available for any age of student. A lot of adults do not qualify because their learning ability is not seen as enough of a negative influence on their life, but it does affect their education."

Instruction

The following aspects of instruction distinguished this study's adult education programs: class scheduling, teaching methods, and instructional resources.

Schedule

The continuum of class schedules ranged from totally scheduled ALC instruction to totally unscheduled LIT instruction. Table 14 shows the number of programs by type that adhered to set subject-specific class times, pre-arranged individual student schedules, mostly unscheduled instruction with some group lessons, and totally unscheduled instruction.

Table 14. SCHEDULE

Program Type		Totally Scheduled: Class Times for Courses	Pre-Arranged Schedule with Individual Students	Mostly Unscheduled: Group Lessons at Scheduled Times	Totally Unscheduled: Students Come When They Can
ALC	day	5	-	-	-
	eve	4	-	-	-
LIT	day	1	5	1	1
	eve	-	2	-	2
ALC/LIT	day	1	-	1	-
	eve	-	-	-	-

ALC Programs. All six ALCs scheduled their classes similarly to public high schools, with subject-specific teachers assigned to each time slot. Even the generalist teaching director Barbara divided her evening program hours into subject-specific class sessions. It should be noted, however, that three programs scheduled more than one subject-related course in the same time slot. For example, math-science specialist teachers Morris and Peter taught math, chemistry, and physics during the same evening time slots, with the help of WEB-CT independent study packages. Barbara also had students working on WEB-CT and teacher-made independent course materials while she taught math and English in separate time slots.

Two of the three ALCs that had both daytime and evening classes scheduled totally separate teachers and course times in these time slots. However, students in the third ALC could switch back and forth between daytime and evening courses, to accommodate shift work and other life responsibilities. This scheduling had significant implications for their teaching loads, because the same teacher had to teach the same courses in day and evening time slots – and maintain the same pace for course content. This ALC offered grade 12 courses only, for students who already had grade 11 courses on their transcripts.

When asked what aspects of their programs should change, four ALC students commented on scheduling. Ruth wanted her program to start at 9:00 a.m. instead of 8:30 a.m. – and she would make up the lost time at noon hour. Eddie wished that all of his courses could be held in either daytime or evening time slots, instead of being split between morning and evening classes. Carla wished that she could take more of her courses in the evening, when her husband was available to provide child care. Angela wished that she could take math in the daytime because “evening classes are fun and easier to attend, but there’s more instruction in the daytime, and you get marks for everything you do instead of just for tests.”

LIT Programs. Only one LIT scheduled separate daytime classes for math and ELA instruction. This program did not offer more generalized instruction or GED test preparation. The other LITs, which offered a wider range of instruction, also offered more flexible scheduling. Five LITs with daytime hours (two of which were also open during evenings) pre-arranged students’ attendance to meet the students’ scheduling needs and to accommodate more students altogether within limited classroom spaces. One of these programs also scheduled group instruction at specific times for particular purposes, such as computer and job skills training. The two remaining LITs served students on a primarily drop-in basis at the students’ convenience. In addition, one of these programs scheduled individual appointments with students one half-day a week, and the other held “mad minutes” in math or ELA, and/or discussion sessions in social studies, at the beginning of every class day. Both of these full-time programs’ coordinators reported that they had a regular set of students who came to class every day, and one program also had a regular set of students every evening.

Coordinator Sheila maintained a complicated list of schedules for individual students: mornings or afternoons, 2-5 days a week, etc. She also explained that other students were essentially unscheduled: “We’re quite flexible. If they come and they work for an hour or so, I don’t expect them to sit for three hours and do math – or reading. That would be deadly if they’re learning a new skill.” Sheila admitted that this flexibility caused difficulty with some students’ sponsoring agencies: “Social Services would like them to come all day every day, but that’s not realistic. I know they’re trying to get them ready for the job market, but this is different. The level of concentration is different.”

ALC/LIT Programs. Perhaps because of their different developmental histories, the two ALC/LITs had very different approaches to scheduling instruction. The program that had started as a LIT was daytime only, mostly unscheduled, with periodic group lessons for students who were available to attend specific math and English lessons. This program did not physically separate students into different subject areas or into ALC-versus-LIT groups. The other program, which had started as an ALC, had set time slots for subject-specific instruction, and it clearly separated the ALC-versus-LIT students. This ALC/LIT also scheduled subject-specific evening classes. Teacher Mandy explained, “The daytime and nighttime courses are parallel, but we don’t allow students to switch back and forth. You’re either all days or you’re all nights. If you switch, you switch for good.” In addition, this ALC/LIT offered noon-hour physical education classes for students who wanted to complete regular high school instead of an Adult 12.

Director Theresa explained, “A lot of students walk in with a full grade 11, so why not finish the regular grade 12? So I teach phys ed Monday to Friday at lunch.”

Method

Although all of this study’s programs operated in group settings, the continuum of teaching methods ranged from classroom-group instruction to totally independent learning with instructor support. Table 15 identifies the number of programs by type that relied on large-group, small-group, one-to-one, and independent learning – and combinations thereof.

Table 15. METHOD

Program Type		Large-Group Instruction, Followed by Individual and Small-Group Work	Primarily One-to-One Instruction with Some Small-Group Work	Primarily One-to-One Instruction with Some Large-Group Lessons	One-to-One Instruction or Independent Learning with Support from the Teacher/Instructor
ALC	day	5	-	-	-
	eve	1	-	-	3
LIT	day	-	6	1	1
	eve	-	4	-	-
ALC/LIT	day	1	1	-	-
	eve	1	-	-	-

ALC Programs. The six ALCs provided primarily classroom-based large-group instruction. A typical class session would start with a teacher-led lesson followed by individual and small-group work on related assignments. Three programs’ evening class sessions also included independent learning (with teacher support) during time slots with multiple subjects per teacher.

A few ALC staff members noted the small-group work that occurred within their teacher-centred classes. Student adviser Janice insisted, “Group work is really important because out in the workplace you’re always on a team. Being a team player is key.” Teacher Albert agreed, “It’s like the real world,” but he added, “There’s going to be people you don’t get along with, and you need to work around that. That’s a work relationship, and that’s what the group stuff is about.” Teacher Lisa credited group work for keeping students in the program: “All year long, they’re with the same people. Working together motivates them to get the work done.”

Several ALC students reported that the best part of their programs was working in groups. Sara and Ruth appreciated their class-time group discussions and opportunities to work on assignments with classmates. Lara said, “I ask new students, ‘Do you want to come and do this with me?’ Something like that happens when we’re children, ‘Hey, do you want to come play with me?’ That should continue when you’re an adult.” Jeff reported, “Everybody here is so welcoming. I’ve made new friends because we work together in class.”

However, other ALC students wished that their programs would offer more individualized instruction. Willa asked for “more direct one-on-one teaching, so I can learn how to do it instead of just being told by the teacher at the front of the class.” Eddie also wished that his teacher had “more time for instruction, especially in math. Sometimes it would be nice to have somebody point out to me that I’ve left out a step, because my answers don’t always turn out the same as

the answers in the book, and I want to know why.” Carla reported needing more individualized help with chemistry, because “I get lost in class, and I end up crying every couple of days.”

LIT Programs. Of the eight LITs, six provided primarily one-to-one learner-based instruction supplemented by periodic group lessons, one relied on large-group teacher-led instruction with follow-up individual and small-group assignments, and one relied solely on one-to-one instruction. Of the four programs with evening class times, two provided one-to-one instruction with some small-group work, one relied on large-group instruction with follow-up individual and small-group assignments, and one relied solely on one-to-one instruction.

Comments by LIT staff revealed that group work was more the exception than the rule in their primarily learner-centred class sessions. Instructor Tricia indicated, “Last year we read a book together.” Instructor Bonnie reported that she used to do group instruction with 5 students who attended two full days every week: “I made up nice lesson plans, and we had little subject areas that we did. Doing the group work was a lot of fun. I miss it!” Coordinator Lyle said, “We talked about that yesterday, that when you go to the adult collegiate you will be required to do group work, so you should try sharing a bit in this group and it will help you.” Instructor Bart dismissed the idea of group work: “We don’t do anything as a group. I do whatever the learners ask of me, one-to-one, when they come to class.”

LIT students very much appreciated the one-to-one assistance that they received from their instructors. Ella said, “The teachers sit with you one-to-one. If you get something wrong, one of them actually sits down and shows you, and gets you to do it right in front of them.” Individualized instruction also afforded freedom to self-pace students’ learning. Charlie explained, “Nobody’s pushing you. There’s no pressure to keep up with anyone else in class.” Ann and Melissa noted the benefits of being able to “come and go” as needed for missed buses, appointments, and looking after children and other family members.

In addition, students in two LITs praised their programs’ group activities. Hope said, “I like it when we play the learning games in very small groups.” Jewel added, “When we do stuff as a group, everybody gets involved and we all get graded for it.” Eva appreciated her program’s morning group activity because “we’re all together for those fun math things and knowledge and stuff like that.” Melissa said that she would “try to get here before the group session starts every morning.” Even individualized learning in a group setting fostered friendships that many students cherished. For example, Ivy exclaimed, “The friends that I’ve made here are awesome! They always encourage you, all that you do.” Eva pointed out that being in a group setting meant that she noticed if other students missed class, and she would “take time to help that one person the next time they came to class, because I know how scared I used to be coming in after I missed school.”

One LIT student wished that his one-to-one program could have group instruction. LIT-OD#19 said, “If I was to change something here, I would get students to help each other. Like brothers and sisters, or like a team of horses or sled dogs. They all work together as one.”

ALC/LIT Programs. The ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program provided primarily one-to-one learner-based instruction, with some small-group instruction when a few students with the same needs were present – such as for drama, short stories, or poetry lessons in grade 12 English. The ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC program provided primarily large-group teacher-led lessons followed by individual and small-group work on related assignments, especially during daytime classes. Teacher Mandy admitted, “We encourage students to come during the day, because in the daytime you are here every day and the instruction is more

distributed. Whereas at night, basically I talk for three hours because the night classes are very condensed.” She added, “Some students want to take night classes because they only have to come once a week, instead of five days. But once they take a few night classes, they usually switch to a day class or just don’t come back.” Teacher Miriam said that she tried to incorporate group work in her daytime classes, by such means as opinion-based discussions and answering textbook questions in pairs, “but the students prefer independent work. They want to be taught it and then go back and do it by themselves.”

Resources

Table 16 shows the types of high school and adult literacy teaching resources that were used by this program’s ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs: textbooks, distance education products, and teacher-made materials.

Table 16. RESOURCES

Program Type		High School Curriculum with Textbooks and Distance Education Products	High School Curriculum with Textbooks and Teacher-Made Materials	Stages Curriculum with Teacher-Made Materials	General Subject Areas with Teacher-Made Materials
ALC	day	2	5	-	-
	eve	3	4	-	-
LIT	day	-	-	4	6
	eve	-	-	2	4
ALC/LIT	day	1	1	4	8
	eve	-	1	2	4

ALC Programs. Manitoba’s ALCs use Manitoba’s high school curricula and textbooks. All of the ALCs in this study supplemented their textbooks with teacher-made instructional materials designed to infuse an adult and/or Aboriginal focus. Teacher Helen said, “I make adult-oriented assignments. I stay away from resources tailored to teenagers.” Three ALCs also accessed WebCT resources from the Province, for use as distance delivery courses or as reference materials for in-class lessons. Director Barbara explained, “You can use it for students who are doing it by distance education, totally electronically. Or you can do what I do, have students do the work on paper and give it to me, so I can keep track.” She added, “Most of the WebCT courses are very similar to what the paper copy would be. I really like it, because students can access it at home. The adults need the paper copy.” ALC staff reported using WebCT courses in grades 11 and 12 math, law, mathematics, chemistry, and physics. Barbara, Morris, and Peter relied on WebCT resources as a means to facilitate teaching more than one course at a time during evening class sessions.

Only one ALC teacher expressed a need for more teaching resources. Peter identified a need for more textbooks, other paper materials, and technology, specifically a smart board.

One ALC student expressed a wish for teacher-directed lessons instead of WebCT course materials. Eddie compared his ALC learning experience to prior learning in a different college setting: “They did a lot of writing on the board. I picked things up fast that way as I watched them and they explained it. Here, it’s taking me longer to pick something up because I’m working on my own.”

LIT Programs. Teacher-made materials dominate LITs’ instructional resources, whether the programs use Stages curricula or develop their own curricula in response to individual students’ needs. The most obvious exception is when instructors use GED preparation textbooks. For the purpose of classifying their resources as “teacher made,” coordinators Molly, Sheila, and Lyle included collections of reading, writing, and math selections photocopied from their favourite textbooks. The four LIT coordinators who refused to use the Stages curricula appeared to base their decisions on a preference to use pre-set materials of their own, because the Stages curricula rely on finding individually relevant resources to develop literacy skills.

Several LIT staff members added consumables and technology to their lists of teaching resources. Coordinator Crystal included stationery and health and safety supplies in her wish list: “There are times that we run out of pencils, we run out of paper, we run out of books. Even things like hand sanitizers. Sometimes it’s hard to get people to understand that we do need things like hand sanitizers.” Only coordinator Maria expressed a need for more technology such as computers. None of the LIT programs in this study had access to smart boards.

When asked for their wish lists for change, only one LIT student identified a teaching resource. Hope, who belonged to coordinator Maria’s program, responded, “Computers. We’ve been having problems since January.”

ALC/LIT Programs. ALC/LITs require resources for both high school and adult literacy program delivery. The two ALC/LITs in this study relied primarily on Manitoba’s prescribed curricula and textbooks for grades 10-12, supplemented by teacher-made materials. Teacher Dawn said, “I individualize the courses with my own materials, in English especially. I adjust the courses for adult content and for the students’ personal likes.” One ALC/LIT also accessed WebCT course materials, and it offered grades 9-12 language credits in Norwegian by means of WebCT distance delivery. Both ALC/LITs used Stages curricula for their adult literacy students, supplemented with teacher-made materials.

The independent ALC/LIT clearly had less access to technology than the ALC/LIT that was hosted by a school division. Teacher ALC-LIT#2 in the independent program identified a general need for “more equipment,” but she did not specify which technology was needed.

Students

This study’s exosystem focus on students targeted their incoming goals, changes in learning and employment goals, other changes, and learning issues.

Incoming Goals

The research participants in all categories reported similar incoming goals in three categories, as summarized in Table 17: academic, employment, and personal.

Table 17. INCOMING GOALS

Program Type	Academic Goals	Employment Goals	Personal Goals
ALC	Adult 12 high school grade 12 post-secondary education not by choice = forced by Workers’ Compensation	a job, a better job job promotion trades, professions, etc.	role model for children help children with homework learn about FN culture

LIT	GED, Adult 12 post-secondary education general skills upgrading computer skills not by choice = forced by social services worker	a job, a better job job promotion trades, professions, etc.	role model for children help children with homework read to (grand)children get used to learning cope with personal issues
ALC/LIT	GED, Adult 12	a job, a better job job promotion trades, professions, etc.	role model for children to please spouse, children cope with personal issues

ALC Programs. Students who attend an ALC are expected to have Adult 12 as their incoming goal, usually in preparation for further education or better employment. Some may use the ALC as a means to fill transcript gaps in order to complete a regular high school diploma. Teacher Larry noted, “They want their doors to be opened. They’re noticing more and more that if you don’t have a grade 12 education of any sort, there’s not as many job opportunities.” Several coordinators and teachers spoke of students who were using the ALC as a stepping stone for admission to post-secondary trades or professional training: electrical, plumbing, auto mechanics, health care, etc. Teacher Bob added, “Some students already have grade 12, but they want to add more courses or improve their marks.” However, teacher Albert admitted that sponsored students in his program “come here because they are paid to come.”

ALC staff also noted personal goals that students hoped to meet in their programs. The most common goal, as articulated by teacher Jill, was “to be a role model for those that come behind me.” Some students were using their own education to motivate their younger children; others were trying to catch up to older children who had already finished high school. Director Karen admitted that some of her program’s students came “to get away from the kids at home.” Students’ other family members and friends also played a role in encouraging them to come back to school. For example, life skills coach Lori noted the positive changes that her current students had seen in people who had previously attended the program.

ALC students had varying attitudes toward returning to school, ranging from Sara’s simple statement “You need your schooling,” to Eddie’s insistence “It’s not really my choice, because I’m on Workers’ Compensation.” Two research students said that they had grade 12 already, but wanted to retake and/or add courses to strengthen their diplomas. Willa needed another grade 12 English for B.Ed. entry, and at the same time she was retaking grade 10 math because she “took it a long time ago.” Lara already had a grade 12 diploma, but she had failed math in a community college course so she wanted to repeat grade 12 math. ALC students reported various employment goals that would require post-secondary education: airplane pilot, auto mechanics, carpentry, business administration, veterinary technician, teacher, nurse, social worker, etc. A few male students had chosen the ALC as a means to transition out of doing manual labour. For example, Dean said, “I’ve been working since high school, doing all kinds of jobs, but last year my knees started to bother me. I decided I had to go back to school because I have no other skills than manual labour.” Angela had decided to become a nurse because she “wouldn’t be able to pay over \$1000 a month for two children in daycare on a receptionist salary.” She added, “I’ll have daycare for four years while I’m in training, and then my children will both be in school.”

The personal goals that ALC students noted were connected to friends, family, and culture. Jeff said that he had been advised by Elders “to keep my mind occupied” after his friend committed suicide. Male and female students reported wanting to help their children with homework. Jack

said, "I've got kids at home now, and I want to be able to help them with their homework when they are old enough." In contrast, June admitted that she was motivated to come back to school so that she would have a job to take her out of the house when her children left home: "I was afraid of my future. My children are growing. What am I going to do when they're all out of the house? What can I look forward to? I don't want to look forward to nothing." Ruth had decided to come to the program after her baby was accepted for onsite childcare. June and Russell had been attracted to their ALC because of what it would teach them about their culture. Russell explained, "I want to learn more about my past, and at the same time get my grade 12. I'm Metis, I think Cree, but I'm not sure." April was determined to "break the cycle of child neglect and other abuses" that she saw her siblings perpetuate as a consequence of "being born into residential school."

LIT Programs. LIT students have many of the same educational and career goals as ALC students, complicated by their lower levels of schooling. They need to improve their literacy skills before they can enter an ALC, which delays the timeline to meet post-secondary education and employment goals. GED offered an alternative to grade 12 in five of this study's LITs. Instructor Bonnie mentioned students who already had grade 12 but needed to "relearn," and other students who received literacy program assistance with their ALC courses. As well, LIT staff identified educational and employment goals that did not require grade 12 or its equivalency: general skills improvement for its own sake, for entry level jobs or job promotions, and for apprenticeship programs. Instructor Sally explained, "The passing years may have put our learners out of the job market, or they may be just looking for something to improve themselves, their lives, through learning to do what they're capable of doing." Coordinator Maria noted the role that her program played in developing immigrant students' English language skills. Coordinator Molly added, "The end result is almost always a job, but there might be some other goals before they get their career employment."

The personal goals that LIT staff reported also paralleled those identified by ALC staff. Their LIT students wanted to be role models and help their children with homework. In addition, they wanted to improve their basic literacy skills in order to become better learners and to cope with personal issues. Instructor Bonnie explained, "For some, it's more of a self-esteem issue. Especially the lower level learners whose previous education was a pretty dismal experience. They're really hurting, so the challenge is to help them feel confident enough to set goals." Bonnie also admitted, "There are some who come because it's their hobby. They come because they like to learn a little each week."

LIT students reported a range of educational and employment goals: general computer skills, grade 9 English and math, grade 11 math, Stage 2 ELA, Stage 3 ELA and math, GED, grade 12, Class 1 driver's licence, carpentry, nursing, massage therapy, veterinary assistant, etc. Valerie said, "I want to get grade 12 the right way, but that could take years. I'm not in a big hurry." Clinton said that he needed upgrading in computers to take a carpentry program, and Rhea "thought computer skills would help me get a job because pretty well every job requires some kind of knowledge of computers." Greg, who had been forced by his social worker to attend the program, was hoping to find an inventory clerk job after he completed Stage 3 ELA and math: "I need math and English comprehension to do inventory in stores. If my boss has to repeat himself because I don't understand, there's a problem. It's embarrassing, especially when they use big words." Charlie had already been promised "a promotion that would double my salary to be a supervisor" if he completed the GED. Melissa said that she would like to earn a health care certificate, "but not if it means much more time in school. I had to quit college before because my older kids were getting into gangs and the younger ones were in daycare. It

was just too hard getting back and forth.” Ann admitted that she had no plans yet: “By the time I’m up to grade 12, I’ll have an idea of what I want to be.”

Several LIT students mentioned the positive effect that their learning was having on their personal lives, such as helping school-age children with homework and reading bedtime stories to younger children. Rose related, “I was reading a book to my grandson one night and he said, ‘Nanny, you don’t read very good.’ And I started to crying. But now I can read all of his bedtime stories.” Ella said that she used to make up stories while pretending to read to her daughter, “but now I’m getting better and some day I will show my daughter that it doesn’t matter how old you are, just go to school and find out what you can do.” Ann asserted, “I want to get off welfare, to show my children that we can pay for things ourselves instead of waiting for the welfare cheque every month. I want them to learn that they can make it on their own.” Charlie had a general personal goal “to better myself,” and Amber was attending the program “to get more comfortable with learning and being with people again” after several months of hospitalization due to social anxiety.

ALC/LIT Programs. The staff members associated with the two ALC/LITs in this study identified different sets of incoming academic, employment, and personal goals for their students. Staff in the ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program listed goals that paralleled those given by LIT program staff. The academic plans ranged from general skills improvement to Adult 12 and beyond. The employment expectations ranged from entry level jobs to professional careers. The personal aspirations ranged from bedtime reading to younger children and role modelling for older children to self-actualization. Teacher Dawn explained, “Some want to improve their reading and writing. Some want a job or a promotion. Some come because their families think it’s really neat if they come back to school. And some really, really want to come back for themselves.”

I interviewed only two students from this ALC/LIT. Drew had been referred by another adult education service in the community, in order to improve his general literacy skills. His goal was to complete the computer course in the other adult education program, in order to provide contracted training services for First Nation band offices. Alice was completing her Adult 12 “just to see if I can do it, because when I was younger I wasn’t very smart in school.” Alice needed just two electives to graduate.

Staff in the ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC program listed a narrower range of goals that paralleled those given by ALC program staff, because the LIT side of this ALC/LIT served as a feeder program for the ALC side. All students’ academic plans began with grade 12 and proceeded to post-secondary education. Their employment expectations relied on secondary and post-secondary schooling. Their personal aspirations also began at a higher educational level, beginning with helping older children with homework through to self-actualization. Career counselor Carman’s words reflected what her ALC/LIT colleagues said: “I want grade 12 to get a better job, to have a better life, to provide better for my children. There’s a pride thing too, for students who are the first in their family to graduate.” Director Theresa acknowledged that some students “were playing the sponsorship game” because they were being paid to go to school. Theresa laughingly said that male students were more likely to come “because a girlfriend or a mother brought them in by the scruff of the neck,” whereas female students would say, “It’s something that I need. I want to be a role model for my children.”

I interviewed only two students from this ALC/LIT. Of these, only Shawna mentioned her incoming goals. She said that she had come to the program because of her son: “I realized that I had to provide for someone. It wasn’t just about me anymore. I wanted to bring him up in a

stable home, and provide him with the things he needs as he grows up.” Shawna had started tutoring grades 5-8 students between her own high school classes, in preparation for becoming a teacher: “Everyone in the classroom is at different levels. I really enjoy it.”

Changes in Learning and Employment Goals

The research participants reported a range of successive changes in students’ learning and employment goals, as depicted in Table 18.

Table 18. CHANGES IN LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT GOALS

Program Type	Learning Goals	Employment Goals
ALC	from minimal Adult12 to specific courses for post-secondary education and employment from Adult 12 to post-secondary school clearer or narrower goals	from unskilled labour to trades and professions different jobs because of learning challenges and successes
LIT	higher goals (e.g., Adult 12 instead of GED) more realistic goals or plan to take more time set goals for the first time	from shift work to daytime job from unskilled labour to trades and professions different jobs because of learning challenges and successes
ALC/LIT	higher goals (e.g., Adult 12 instead of GED) from Adult 12 to post-secondary school from minimal Adult12 to specific courses for post-secondary education and employment	from unskilled labour to trades and professions different jobs because of learning challenges and successes

ALC Programs. Because ALCs are adult high schools, their students’ minimum goal is to complete the Adult 12 or to fill gaps in their high school transcripts to complete a regular high school diploma or to meet specific course requirements by employers (such as Manitoba Hydro) or post-secondary institutions. Several ALC teachers agreed with Helen that “it’s rare to change that incoming goal.” For example, Jill said, “Our learners are very focused. Whatever they say they want, they stick to because they’re adults.” However, other staff members recalled students who had raised their learning and job goals as they experienced success in the ALC, such as by changing their ultimate goal from Adult 12 for entry-level employment to community college or university that will lead to a trade or profession. Director Steve reported, “They change their mind because they are experiencing the success that they’ve never experienced before, and they change their attitude about what their potential is.” Teacher Bob acknowledged that students sometimes lowered their goals “because they discover weaknesses after they take a few courses.”

ALC students reported changing their academic and employment goals in response to both successes and failures in their high school programming – and the availability of post-secondary education in their home communities. Lara had changed her post-secondary goal from nursing to social work when her math marks were too low to meet the nursing entry requirements. She commented, “Not all of us can be nurses, I guess, so I’m taking the next best thing. Nursing and social work are both in the caring field.” Jack initially wanted to use the Adult 12 to get into auto

mechanics, but he changed his mind to take carpentry when he found out that he would have to travel 800 K from home to attend a college that offered mechanics courses.

LIT Programs. LIT students' goals are based on a wide range of prior schooling and job experiences. Coordinator Lyle described students who had an initial goal "of just being here, because they don't know exactly what they want to learn," but whose "goals become loftier when they realize, 'Hey, I can do this.'" Instructor Tammy agreed that "meeting one goal creates another." She noted the influence that college career days had on expanding her students' goals beyond "just the jobs they have seen in their own communities: nurses, teachers, forestry workers, policemen, etc. It doesn't necessarily mean that's where they'll end up, but it opens their eyes to what's available." Instructor Tina spoke of "the gold standard of the high school diploma" as her students' primary objective, adding, "People here who do not have that tangible goal tend to fall by the wayside." In addition to noting students' transitions to higher goals in response to their LIT experiences, several staff members recalled students who had lowered their self-expectations. For example, coordinator Olive said, "They may change from GED to a series of skills goals, such as fractions, with GED as a long-term goal." Coordinator Sheila also described sitting down with students to help them make "more realistic goals."

LIT students reported having developed a broader perspective that changed their learning and job goals. Hope had changed her goal from a university degree to a lab technology diploma, because she recognized that her social anxiety disorder would cause problems at university. Amber had switched her LIT learning focus to ELA when she encountered difficulties in her computer course: "My bipolar was getting in the way, but now I can learn English at my own pace, when I feel ready." Ann had changed her post-program plans from completing the Adult 12 at a college ALC to "doing it at the other adult high school where I can get more upgrading and then work at my own pace when I'm ready for grade 11."

ALC/LIT Programs. As was true of students' incoming goals, the changes in learning and employment goals reflected each ALC/LIT's origin as either a LIT or an ALC. The director of the ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program said that her students' goals typically changed to post-secondary education instead of seeking employment after Adult 12 graduation, and to finishing GED or a Mature High School Diploma instead of completing just the Stages 2 and 3. The other ALC/LIT director identified differences between older and younger students: "Our older demographic don't change their goals. They are driven and they know what they want. The younger ones haven't quite made the transition to adulthood, so they are more apt to change their minds." She reported that her LIT students' goals did not change from moving on to the adult high school program, but her ALC students' goals sometimes changed "from finishing grade 12 to going to post-secondary school, especially if they get scholarships that they never thought they'd get." Teacher Miriam added, "Once they become comfortable, they want to challenge themselves. They don't want to sell themselves short anymore. They've already sold themselves short by dropping out of school. They want to be fully prepared for everything, including university."

One ALC/LIT student reported changing her initial learning goal from grade 12 to a Bachelor of Education. She explained, "I want to get all of my schooling over while my son is still young. He'll be seven when I finish the B.Ed."

Other Changes in Students

In addition to changes in students' learning and employment goals, this study revealed a variety of academic and personal changes, as identified in Table 19.

Table 19. OTHER CHANGES IN STUDENTS

Program Type	Academic Changes	Personal Changes
ALC	not intimidated by educational buildings confidence and pride in learning not afraid of tests prepared to learn from mistakes willing to redo assignments learn how to learn learn to study and do homework	self-esteem more outgoing, develop a "voice" more mature attitude and behavior better communication skills better relationships with family members physical hygiene and appearance
LIT	more comfortable in school setting confidence and take pride in learning feel "smart" learn how to learn	self-esteem more outgoing, develop a "voice" feel valued erect posture, happy demeanour better communication skills confidence in interacting with others physical hygiene and appearance
ALC/LIT	attend more regularly confidence and pride in learning learn how to learn take learning seriously respect other students at all skill levels	self-esteem more outgoing, develop a "voice" feel valued and respect others erect posture, happy demeanour better communication skills confidence in interacting with others physical hygiene and appearance

ALC Programs. ALC staff specified academic changes that made their students more willing and able to learn. Teacher Bob reported that his students experienced "growth in their understanding of what education is. For example, they learn the value of rewriting rough drafts to get a good copy." Teacher Ken added, "Students who've been out of school for 16-20 years learn how to study, how to do homework. They learn how to learn from their mistakes." Teacher Albert affirmed, "They begin to take pride in their learning," and his colleague Lisa reported, "They find out they're intelligent."

Increased self-esteem was the most common personal change identified by ALC staff, with corollary developments in students' communication skills and general interactions with others, including family members. Life skills coach Lori explained, "Some come in very quiet with low self-esteem, heads down, scared to speak up, but when they leave they're outgoing and confident. It's like they're like diamonds in the rough, and when they come back to visit they just shine." Teacher Albert indicated that his students "say they feel different, and their families notice the difference, too." Teacher Jill connected increases in self-esteem with changes in individual students' habits of dress and hygiene: "They clean up. They wear laundered clothes, and they scrub up more often." Like teacher Bob, teacher Jill noted that her students became more mature: "They stop acting like adolescents."

The ALC students also reported experiencing academic and personal growth. ALC-W#54 explained, "I've never been in the workforce, but I knew education was always in me, waiting for me. To understand everyday life. The teachers here gave me that." ALC-W#54 said that her ALC's staff "teach us about ourselves, our own way of understanding. Everything we need to move forward." Dean noted, "This is helping me get into the classroom setting, organizing myself, my time. I try to apply what I learn to my work and everything that I do at home." He added, "I come here every day. I treat it like it's my job. I treat this place and everyone here with respect. Everything's got to mean something. Otherwise, you're doing it for nothing." Lara asserted, "I have school friends who are younger than me. But outside of school I have older friends. I want to learn from their mistakes. I want their parts of wisdom."

LIT Programs. LIT staff focused on aspects of academic self-esteem as the predominant academic change in their students. Coordinator Molly described this change as "beautiful. They become more confident, and they talk about their learning at home." She and coordinator Olive saw their students' increased comfort levels in parent-teacher interviews about their children as evidence of this academic growth. Instructor Bart and coordinators Sheila and Lyle explained how their students would "open up" in the classroom once they felt more comfortable asking questions. Instructor Tammy described students who "couldn't read before, and now they can read upside down across the table. They've accomplished something, and they're ready to try something else." Instructor Trysha referred to this change as a visible "glow," and instructor Bart said it was "a whole happy spirit, so different from when they first walk into the program, afraid to even try to learn."

When asked about their students' personal changes, most LIT staff quickly replied "higher self-esteem" or "more confidence." Several reported far-reaching personal effects that accrued from receiving positive reinforcement by instructors and peers. Coordinator Lyle explained, "It's all about people feeling valued. They get support from us, and from the other students. They learn how to problem solve together, so their ability to cope with life improves along with their academic skills." Coordinator Crystal spoke of one learner who "came in too shy to speak," but was such a "totally different person" after being in the program that she was managing a hotel at the time of this study. Crystal gave another example of a man who "had to have somebody else walk him in the door when he first came, he was that nervous," but who was "in university and on the student council" at the time of this research.

In addition to identifying particular subject areas that they felt more confident in, LIT students reported feeling generally more committed because of their academic growth. Deanna stated, "I'm more interested now than I was before, and I guess I'm not as stupid as I thought." Greg insisted, "If you don't come, that much you miss. If you miss three days, that much you lose. When you work somewhere, if you miss three days, what happens to your paycheque?" Ann said, "I'm not rushing. I don't just skip from book to book. I finish them and then I go back and make sure that I know them. I want to keep everything I learn in my head." Elsa asked, "Where would everybody be without adult education? That's why it's important for you to attend, do your schoolwork, in order to get somewhere in life, to better yourself."

LIT students also articulated personal changes that they experienced because of attending their adult education programs. Darla said, "I just feel more confident. I've got more self-esteem. I'm a much happier person now." Melissa explained, "They make you feel like you're doing something very, very nice and that you're doing something good for yourself." Other students gave more specific examples of their personal growth. Ivy happily reported, "I never thought that I would speak in public, but I made a speech about the program and I won an award. I have it in a glass frame and my certificate from Literacy Partners." Ivy stated, "Before, I wasn't able to

handle housing, and now I'm able to talk to them. She added, "I stood up to my social workers, too. I said, 'It's not that I want to be on you guys forever, but I'm just not ready yet. I need more education before I can get a job.'"

ALC/LIT Programs. ALC/LIT staff noted growth in their students' academic confidence and attitude toward learning. The improvements that teacher Dawn saw in her students' ability to analyse nurtured their sense of academic self-worth, which made them "think everything is a possibility" and gave them a "voice" in the classroom. Tutor Julie explained how this new self-confidence engendered self-respect: "They start respecting their own opinion. There is just the whole sense of having a belief in themselves." Director Joyce described a student who "came in saying, I'll tell you right now, I don't like school," but whose attitude "changed completely within just a few days" of successful learning. Administrative assistant Shelley noted students' increasing levels of commitment to their learning: "They take learning seriously, and they don't tolerate other students fooling around."

Most ALC/LIT staff used "self-esteem," "self-confidence," and "social skills" to describe their students' personal changes while in their programs. Teacher Glenn perceived self-confidence as a natural function of "recovering from negative school experiences." Career counselor Carman connected social skills development to the students' comfort levels: "When they come here every day, they change in how comfortable they are interacting with other students." Director Joyce recalled students whose "whole demeanour, dress, confidence, attitude, everything" had changed when they experienced success. Administrative assistant Shelley had seen students develop respect for other people and for the program site: "They learn respect. We expect them to stop when O Canada is playing, and remove their hats. At first they didn't, but they do that now, out of respect."

The two students whom I interviewed from the school division based ALC/LIT expressed a combination of academic and personal changes that they had seen in themselves. Shawna appreciated "having the chance to come to school every day, and learning, and walking out of here at the end of the day and feeling good about yourself. And feeling like you've accomplished something." Shawna had come to appreciate spending a start-up year in the literacy part of the program: "At fist, I was disappointed because I just wanted to get everything done, and graduate. But now I'm happy that I spent the extra year in upgrading, because it paid off. It totally prepares you."

Learning Issues

The research participants revealed learning issues related to students' special needs, interest levels, preferred learning pace, distractibility, fear of learning, and requirements by sponsors. Table 20 shows the distribution of these issues by program type.

Table 20. LEARNING ISSUES

Program Type	Special Learning Needs	Reluctance or Disinterest	Pace of Instruction	Classroom Distractions	Fear of Learning	Sponsor Limitations
ALC	+	+	+	+	+	+
LIT	+	-	-	+	+	-
ALC/LIT	+	-	-	+	+	+

ALC Programs. Various learning issues typify ALCs. Life skills coach Lori acknowledged, “What a good program is, is kind of different for everybody, because everybody has different needs.” She spoke of students who “need to wander because they can’t sit still and focus, or they’re not interested in the material, or the lesson is going too fast or too slow, or they’re distracted by people talking or asking too many questions.” Director Barbara explained that several of her students were reluctant learners because “in this community where there’s lots of money to be made without a grade 12, the value in education is not really there.” Barbara also described students who were afraid to come to class: “It’s intimidating because they haven’t been to school for many years.” Director Kathy mentioned the “forced withdrawal” consequences of reporting absences to students’ sponsors.

Only one ALC student mentioned having a specific difficulty with learning. Lara blamed her own procrastination for holding her back: “I procrastinate, but I know that only you can make the difference, and nobody else. It all depends on you, whether you want to be a hindrance or that positive role model for yourself and others.”

LIT Programs. Although coordinator Lyle insisted that learning disabilities (LDs) did not factor into his students’ performance because “we refer students with those challenges to other programs that have that expertise,” most LIT staff were quick to identify LDs as a determining factor for many of their students’ learning difficulties. Coordinator Sheila said, “They know that they’ve had a hard time in school, but they don’t know why. I may spend several weeks trying to figure out what kind of disability a student may have, and how I can help them cope.” Sheila also spoke of students who “just haven’t had the opportunity to go to school, maybe because their parents were on the trap line, and so then you have to figure out whether there’s a learning disability or just a lack of opportunity to learn.” Several LIT staff noted the roles that heightened fear and low confidence played in delaying their students’ progress. Instructor Tina explained, “The biggest challenge is usually confidence. I don’t think they recognize that until they get here, because they’re so scared. It’s all about building confidence.”

LIT students identified special learning needs, classroom distractions, and fear as their barriers to learning. Several identified difficulties with specific subject areas (such as reading or math) and LDs (such as dyslexia). Others spoke of classroom annoyances, notably people talking. Greg explained, “Concentration is very important. I’m not here to play around. I’m here. I’m serious.” Hope added, “When I’m trying to read, I need quiet. I have a hard time with distraction.” Megan articulated her fear of learning: “When I was in school I was classified as stupid, so when I first came here I was too scared to trust people. I thought they would look down at me if I made a mistake.”

ALC/LIT Programs. A few ALC/LIT staff mentioned LDs as problematic for their students. Psychologist Marilyn noted, “Students don’t grow out of LDs such as ADHD, but they can learn to cope with it.” Teacher Mandy said, “We can’t give them the same help in grades 10-12 that they had in school, but there’s a teacher aide to help them in the upgrading program.” Teacher Dawn admitted that some of her students were not interested in learning: “The odd learner’s heart just isn’t in the program. You can see the potential, but sometimes it’s difficult to sway them.” Teacher Mandy expressed frustration with sponsors who required students to finish literacy upgrading in one semester, then grade 11 in the next semester, and then grade 12 in a third semester – a year-and-a-half altogether. She added, “It’s an impossible expectation. Some students need a whole year just to upgrade to grade 9.”

Only one ALC/LIT student mentioned a learning difficulty. Alice said that she had “a problem with the new formulas and stuff that I didn’t take before because I quit after grade 8.”

Student Supports

The non-academic supports provided by adult education programs depend not only on finances, but also on the program administrators' expectations of student needs. In addition to the student support workers identified as "nonteaching staff" in the "exosystem staff" section of this report, the study's ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT programs offered the following other types of onsite support, as depicted in Table 21: transportation, off-site child care, food, GED fees, emergency funding, and food banks. Externally sponsored students may also have qualified for extra supports authorized by their funding agents, and all students had external access to the supports offered by their communities' government and non-profit service agencies. As well, some of these sponsors paid tuition fees to the adult education programs.

Table 21. PROGRAM SUPPORTS TO STUDENTS

Program Type	Transportation	Off-Site Child Care	Breakfast and/or Snack Food	GED Test Fees	Emergency Funding and Food Bank
ALC	4		2	-	2
LIT	6	1	7	3	-
ALC/LIT	2		1	-	-

ALC Programs. Of this study's six ALCs, three were located in communities with public bus transportation, but only one had a small budget for bus tickets. Only one program offered daily transportation (via a local school division bus if the student lived more than 1.6 K from the program site), but two other programs provided "as needed" transportation to court and doctor appointments. In addition, student adviser Janice would drive students when the temperature fell below -30° C. Two programs regularly provided breakfast foods and periodically provided other food such as bannock lunches. Two programs had small budgets for student emergency funds, one of which maintained an emergency food bank. However, director Barbara declared of her program, "This is a fairly wealthy community, so my students don't need food and other supports. They're only here for a couple of hours at a time, in the evening."

Of the 15 ALC students in this study, 6 listed food as their programs' best feature. Sara replied, "The breakfast program, because I don't have time to eat in the morning and I can't wait until lunch." Sara had also accessed emergency funding to replace her broken eyeglasses. Jeff added, "There's coffee here, doughnuts, everything," and students Jeff and Angela noted their program's luncheons, bannock Wednesdays, banquet suppers, and Christmas dinner. June and Iris spoke of feasts in conjunction with the cultural ceremonies that their ALC hosted. Jack expressed appreciation for his program counselor's help to apply for external bursaries. Iris said that one of her teachers "helped me out with bus tickets when I lost my bus pass."

LIT Programs. Of this study's eight LITs, five were located in communities with public bus transportation. Four of these programs had small budgets for bus tickets, and two other programs would sometimes pay for taxi rides. In addition, one program gave students \$10 per class for off-site babysitting. All but one program provided daily snack foods, and one program held periodic potlucks at noon hour, with most of the food provided by program staff. Two other programs also provided daily lunches at no charge to students, courtesy of their host non-profit agencies. Left-overs from one LIT daytime "life skills" cooking classes were also made available to this program's evening students. Three programs fundraised to pay students' GED test fees.

Providing snacks was very important to several LIT staff. Coordinator Nancy explained, “Many students have been working all day, and some of them haven’t even had dinner. They get coffee, and we usually have cookies or crackers or something like that. That socialization time is very important.” Coordinator Sheila also described her program’s potlucks as essential for providing opportunities to socialize in addition to distributing food: “The potluck lunches are our way of reaching out and just having a good time. [Brent] and I bring pizza, meatballs, fruit, cheese – foods that the learners can’t afford to buy because a lot of them are on fixed incomes.” When asked about their programs’ best features, instructors Brent and Bart replied simply, “The food.” Bart added, “One gentleman who graduated his GED and is now in university needed that food. He would come in and start eating away. It’s our way of being gracious. We always have coffee and a nice food to go with it.”

A few LIT students identified food as one of their programs’ best features. Student Greg noted, “The hospitality – free coffee and toast, cookies. That’s important because if you need to go to school with an empty stomach, chances are you’re not going to learn.” Student Amber appreciated “the way [Maria] integrates everyday cooking into our lessons. And we can bring our lunch and socialize with people.” Student Hope reported that she did volunteer reception work in the program because her sponsor gave her “a supplement if I volunteer so many days a month.” Student Ann reported that her sponsoring agency gave her a bus pass that restricted her program attendance to 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

ALC/LIT Programs. Neither of this study’s ALC/LIT programs was located in a community with public bus transportation, but both offered transportation by school bus. One program paid \$400 per month for individual students who needed this service from the local school division, and the other program accessed this service free of charge from its host school division (provided that the students passed criminal and child abuse records checks). One program also provided emergency transportation to the hospital and to mental health appointments. In addition, this program provided breakfast foods on site.

ALC/LIT teacher Dawn listed food, the fridge, and the microwave as significant program aspects: “The coffee pot is always on. Bread in the freezer, peanut butter and jam in the fridge, to make toast. They put their lunch in the fridge and heat it in the microwave, so it feels like a second home.” Director Theresa noted that her students had access to daycare subsidies and extra living expense supplements from their community sponsors.

Atmosphere

In addition to the atmospheric contributions of free coffee and food, the research participants reported the effects of creating an adult community, interpersonal relationships, validation, safety, and homey climate. Table 22 reveals the distribution of these elements by program type.

Table 22. CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE

Program Type	Adult Learning Community	Reciprocal Interpersonal Relationships	Focus on Validation	Safe Place to Come	Homey Climate
ALC	+	+	+	+	+
LIT	+	+	+	+	+
ALC/LIT	+	+	+	+	+

ALC Programs. ALC staff very much appreciated working in an adult learning community and developing interpersonal relationships with their students. Teacher Larry explained, “It’s a bunch of adults together, enjoying each other’s company and learning from one another. It’s an open environment, so there’s no discipline – that’s huge.” Teacher Bob had found “more rewards to work in adult education. The students are not satisfied with just telling them something. They want to know why. You are challenged to bring in background connections, because adults don’t take things for granted.” Other staff reported that they enjoyed getting to know the diverse learners in their ALCs, noting their different personalities and sociocultural backgrounds. Several ALC staff cited their relationships with students as the best part of their job. Life skills coach Lori stated simply, “We care about them.” Teacher Albert added, “There’s a line between the student and the teacher, but they should realize you’re a real person. You don’t have to be their best friend, but they can approach you and have respect for you, and vice versa.”

Student validation appeared in several ALC staff interviews. Teacher Helen said that “watching learners succeed” was the best part of her job: “It’s pretty exciting when they work through their assignments, and you tell them, wow, this is way better than what you started with!” Teaching director Barbara reported, “I like giving them the satisfaction and confidence that they can do it.” Teacher Albert explained, “We’re doing our best so whatever they need to work on can be discovered. Once that happens, the academics are the icing on the cake. They’re not just getting their grade 12; they’re buying into the spirit of education.”

An emotionally and academically safe atmosphere was mentioned by one ALC’s teachers. Albert stated, “Our students feel safe. They can just be themselves, or at least test out being themselves, if they’re shy or not used to that stuff.” Lisa added, “The life skills coach makes them feel safe. She sets the tone of the classroom in terms of a trusting atmosphere: nonjudgmental, sharing, and safe.”

ALC students described their relationships with teachers, counselors, and classmates as essential to their learning. When asked about their ALCs’ best features, several replied simply, “the teachers” or “the counselor(s).” June reported, “The teachers are really awesome. I love the way they teach, because there’s humor in it. Humor is good medicine for anything. And they are so understanding. I couldn’t ask for anything more.” Russell lamented, “My favorite teacher is retiring this year. It’s a shame that he’s leaving, but people do get old.” Carla appreciated how her program’s counselor remembered her personal issues when she returned to school after being away for several months. Jeff responded, “For me, the best part is making new friends. Everybody here is so welcoming.”

Other ALC students mentioned the adult and homey nature of their programs. Sara noted that being treated as an adult meant that she could take smoke breaks during class: “Give me my smoke break and I’ll be smiling.” Jeff described her program’s classroom climate as “homey,” within the context of describing the student lounge space and the interpersonal relationships that he had developed with classmates.

LIT Programs. LIT staff also enjoyed their adult learning communities. Several repeated “I love my job!” at various points of their interviews, while describing the nature of their program setting and their relationships with individual students. Coordinator Crystal reported, “I love working with people. I love different things happening all the time. I never know what I’m going to be teaching from day to day. It’s always interesting.” Coordinator Sheila said, “Some learners just like the environment. They say it’s quiet, it’s relaxed, they don’t feel too much pressure. If they want to take a break they can take a break, that kind of thing.” Instructor Stella described her program’s coordinator as “able to really give that whole kind of ease to people who have had

bad past experiences in education. It's scary, coming back, but [Nancy] makes them feel comfortable right from the start." Coordinator Crystal declared simply, "They like us!" and instructor Sally said, "Working with the individual learners is what keeps me here." Sally added, "Seeing them, talking to them, and learning from them keeps me grounded. You realize how lucky you were for the education that you have, and the opportunities that not everyone else has. It's a privilege to know these remarkable adults." At some point during their interviews, all LIT staff members noted the importance of cultivating positive interpersonal relationships with their students.

Student validation was also high on most LIT staff lists of "best program features." Instructor Bart explained, "They're validated here. We make sure they have successes and that they move ahead. If there is a direct goal, we help them to get that goal." Instructor Bonnie described "seeing them come in and they're happy with themselves because they managed to do something that they felt they couldn't do. That's just a wonderful thing to see." Coordinator Lyle said, "Everyone who comes here should feel valued. The part I love the most is when they start having successes, and they feel like, wow, I can really do this. And it's like, yes, I knew you could all along." For coordinator Nancy, student validation was engendered by the "high level of respect" that she and her instructors demanded "for and from everyone in the program."

For LIT staff, having a "safe" program meant physical safety in addition to emotional and academic safety. For example, coordinator Lyle was referring to physical safety when he described his program as "a safe place for learners to come," whereas other coordinators and instructors stressed the emotional and academic safety of their programs' "comfortable," "nonjudgmental" classroom environments. Instructor Tina added, "This should be a safe place – a sort of separation from whatever else is going on in their lives, but at the same time hopefully we are doing things that will help in other aspects of life." Coordinator Crystal described her program as academically "neutral territory" that separated students from their prior "negative experiences in school."

LIT students did not specifically mention being in an "adult" learning community, but they described program features that define adult literacy settings. For example, Valerie said, "The teachers here don't make me feel stupid, like I did in school." Mellissa appreciated "being able to come and go, which is important when you have kids at home." Greg reported "learning at my own pace, without anyone pushing me, c'mon, c'mon, c'mon." Charlie said that he felt welcome to stay in the program as long as he thought he needed it: "You go when you're good and ready, not because somebody else says you have to go."

All of the LIT students mentioned interpersonal relationships with instructors and/or classroom peers. Hope spoke of her relationship with instructor Bart: "He can look at me and tell right away that something's not right, and then he'll talk. It helps, because sitting there with my 15-year-old son – you can't really talk to him." Eva reported that students in her program worked together to boost individual students' spirits: "We all know each other, and if someone is not feeling too happy one day we all sit and talk as a group for a few minutes just to help that one person." Several students reported making strong friendships with other students, and said that they intended to maintain these relationships after they left their literacy programs.

Several LIT students reported how much they needed to feel validated in their programs. Melissa appreciated "being given the confidence that you can do it." Hope said, "[Maria] goes around speaking individually to everyone here and helping them. I like that she pays attention to all of us." Amber reported that her instructor "checks up on everyone and makes you feel like

whatever you have written is valuable, so it encourages you to write a little bit more the next time.”

Other LIT students commented on the homey atmosphere in their programs, which they interpreted in terms of having a relaxed learning climate, eating lunch together, and sharing both in-school and out-of-school experiences. Amber explained, “It’s just so nice here. We eat lunch together and socialize.” Hope said that she had shared her written work with another student, whereas “before, I wouldn’t show my stories to anyone.” Ann said that she had talked about her family with other students: “It helps, because most of us are parents and we have the same issues. I consider this place my second home.”

ALC/LIT Programs. ALC/LIT staff described their programs’ adult learning environments. Teacher Dawn explained that in her program, “The learners tend to form their own community. They don’t feel that somebody is better than they are, because the literacy and high school students are all mixed together. They work side-by-side and they feel part of the same community.” For career counselor Carman in the other ALC/LIT, treating the program as a job was evidence of an adult approach to learning: “For example, I have a student who comes every morning at 8:30 and she leaves at 3:45. She sees it as her job because she is sponsored to be here.” Carman’s colleague Julie noted that adult students “bring their own life lessons into the learning experiences” and then “apply what they learn to their own lives, such as personal finances.”

Interpersonal relationships were an important aspect of both ALC/LITs’ classroom climates. Director Joyce referred to “the camaraderie between staff and learners.” Instructor Dawn (in the same program) explained, “Everybody knows each other after a while. A lot of learners maybe don’t know a whole lot of people, and they get an opportunity to meet new people who are doing much the same things as they are.” In the other ALC/LIT, director Theresa reported, “In our classroom, it’s not that typical authoritarian relationship between teacher and students. It’s more of a collaboration process,” but she admitted, “Some are on that path kicking and screaming, and some are in front with the teacher, ready to go through.” Teacher Miriam identified as this program’s best feature “the relationships that you build with the students.”

Student validation featured prominently in staff members’ appraisals of their ALC/LIT programs. Teacher Dawn said, “I really love the literacy. To see those learners just blossom, and self-esteem, and everything just starting to come together, to me is one of the most amazing things.” Teacher Glenn agreed, “I love to see the eureka, when a student has been working on something and all of a sudden it’s ‘So that’s how you do it.’ The room lights up.” Glenn added, “The other thing that I teach for is after they leave. When I’m walking down the street and they come up to me and say thank you.” He recounted, “The other day one of my previous students spent 20 minutes in a snowstorm explaining how his life had changed because of the upgrading. He had finished grade 12, and now he’s at college, learning to be a cook.” The ultimate validation in each ALC/LIT was the graduation ceremony that each hosted, complete with a supper that included family and friends.

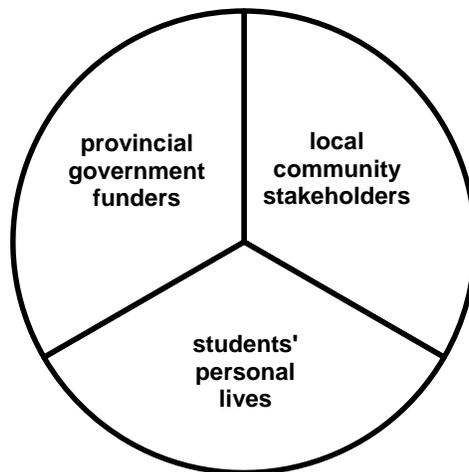
ALC/LIT staff also noted the safety and hominess that characterized their learning environments. Director Joyce described her program as “a safe place for learners to come,” and teacher Dawn attributed the same program’s “homey atmosphere” to the way that “everyone is mixed together, whether literacy or high school,” so that “everyone is equal and they feel comfortable, like a family.” In the other ALC/LIT, tutor Julie explained, “Our centre, in many ways, helps them not only with their education but with their comfort level. We are the safe place for a lot of our students.”

ALC/LIT student Shawna put her relationships with teachers and her feelings of validation at the top of her program’s list of best features. She said, “I can joke around with a lot of the teachers. I have more of a friend bond with them than a teacher-student bond,” and she added, “You can talk to them about anything. If one teacher doesn’t get something, you can go to another teacher. They’re always just willing to help. They are really understanding.” Shawna also described feeling validated: “You come to school every day and walk out of here at the end of the day feeling good about yourself. And feel like you’ve accomplished something.”

MACROSYSTEM

The macrosystem consists of factors that are beyond each adult education program’s control: government funders, community stakeholders, and students’ personal lives (see Figure 5). Manitoba’s ALCs and LITs are funded by the Adult Learning and Literacy (ALL) branch of the Government of Manitoba, so they interact with provincial government employees who act as agents for Adult Learning Centre (ALC) and Adult Literacy Program (ALP) grants. In addition, ALCs and LITs interact with local stakeholders in other educational institutions and community service agencies, both public and private. Aspects of students’ personal lives have profound macrosystem effects on adult education people and programming.

Figure 5. MACROSYSTEM



Provincial Government Funders

Table 23 depicts the ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT relationships with the Government of Manitoba.

Table 23. PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT FUNDERS

Program Type	Adult Learning Centre Funders	Adult Literacy Program Funders
ALC	+	
LIT		+
ALC/LIT	+	+

ALC Programs. ALCs interact with the ALL funding agents responsible for ALC grants. The ALC directors in this study gave no details about their relationships with individual provincial government representatives, but three directors noted difficulties with the system of applying for annual grant renewals. Steve recommended multi-year ALC applications, preferably every 2-3 years instead of every year, with a tiered system to separate new from existing programs. Karen recommended streamlining the applications so that existing programs would not need to “cut-and-paste everything” from previous applications each year. Kaye objected to the requirement that applications be mailed in hard copy each year; she recommended that programs be permitted to fax the documents or submit them electronically.

LIT Programs. LITs interact with ALL funding agents responsible for ALP grants. The LIT coordinators in this study spoke of having excellent relationships with their regions’ provincial government representatives. For example, Nancy described her ALP representative as “one of the best people you could ever work with. She’s dedicated to literacy. She gets the idea of what community-based literacy is all about. She always provides wise advice and is willing to support in any way she can.” Martha said of the same ALP representative, “The learners just love it when she comes to the program. If they know she’s coming, the learners are all there, wanting to talk to her. That’s huge.” Sheila also praised her ALP representative: “She is the right kind of person for me, because she is wonderfully patient. She knows what happens. She knows what we’re fighting for, and she does her best to fight for whatever we feel we need.”

However, six LIT coordinators complained about the paperwork required to access their ALP grants. Molly explained, “We had five different accountability reports due to ALL within five weeks this year. It was ridiculous. You have to show how you’re dreaming, and then you don’t have time to implement anything because you’re too busy with the paperwork.” Molly added, “None of the stuff they ask for is bad. In fact, it’s all good. But one set of statistics a year would be plenty. I have 140 students altogether in a year, and it takes hours to count them twice a year.” Crystal said that she had to attend meetings in northern and southern Manitoba to learn how to fill out the forms, adding “with everything ALL wants, I would have to shut down everything for about a month to do it during my working hours. And they say they’re expecting even more next year – more reports.” Crystal had three recommendations: “Change the timing of the reports, reduce the number of reports, and cut the length of each report.”

ALC/LIT Programs. ALC/LITs interact with ALL funding agents responsible for both ALC and ALP grants. Director Joyce reporting having “lots of contact” with ALL representatives in Winnipeg and with her regional representative in northern Manitoba.

Local Community Stakeholders

The local ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT stakeholders mentioned in this study included schools and other adult education programs, government and community service agencies, and student sponsors, as depicted in Table 24.

Table 24. LOCAL COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Program Type	Local School Division	Adult Education Programs	Government Service Agencies	Community Service Agencies	Student Fee Sponsors
ALC	+	+	+	+	+
LIT	-	+	+	+	+
ALC/LIT	+	+	+	+	+

ALC Programs. Most ALC directors described exchanging student referrals with their local adult literacy programs. Only director Barbara specifically stated that she was “unaware of any communication” between her ALC and her community’s LIT. Director Karen spoke of attending mutual training sessions at another ALC in her community. She and director Kaye reported having close working relationships with their host community colleges. Directors Barbara and Kathy communicated with their local school divisions regarding granting regular high school course credits in addition to Mature High School Diploma credits. Kathy also offered dual credit programming with her local community college, and she maintained working relationships with the various local employers who offered work placements for ALC students in the high school apprenticeship program.

LIT Programs. LIT coordinators reported having reciprocal referral relationships with their local ALCs and with any other LITs in the same community. Lyle reported that he referred students with special learning needs to another LIT that had “that expertise.” Another coordinator hosted an annual learners’ conference for the various LITs in her community. Several coordinators listed a variety of government and community service agencies that kept in touch because of sponsored (and other) clients who attended LIT programs: Employment Assistance, Income Assistance, Social Services, mental health workers, etc.

All of the LIT coordinators felt that their programs had earned a reputation for providing a valuable and respected service in the community. Nevertheless, Sheila admitted that the communication with her local ALC was one way: she referred students when they were ready to pursue high school credits, but she had received no reciprocal referrals to date from the newest ALC director. Lyle’s program was more than two decades old, yet he reported, “Several years ago, I ran across some literacy spokespeople for our community’s reading association. They were a bunch of old teachers who didn’t even know that adult literacy programs exist. They thought they were it!”

ALC/LIT Programs. Director Joyce reported attending inter-agency meetings regularly with about 30 other educational and social service representatives from her community. She also had “lots of contact with Employment Manitoba” because of its agents’ relationships with her students. Teacher Mandy focused on her program’s reputation in the community: “I think we’ve turned the community around. We’ve had a lot of events, things happening in our gym all the time. We are trying to get the message out that we are the best kept secret in town.”

Students’ Personal Lives

Table 25 summarizes the following aspects of students’ personal lives that emerged in this research: transportation, housing, employment, family and friends, and other personal issues.

Table 25. STUDENTS’ PERSONAL LIVES

Program Type	Transportation	Housing	Employment	Family and Friends	Other Personal Issues
ALC	x	x	x	x	x
LIT	x	x	x	x	x
ALC/LIT	x	x	x	x	x

ALC Programs. ALC life skills coach Lori summarized this macrosystem element with her simple statement “Adults can be the most challenging students, because of their wide range of experiences and issues.” Monetary concerns underlay many students’ out-of-program problems

with transportation and housing. In communities without public transportation, getting to class was both expensive and inconvenient, because the students relied on taxis and the generosity of classmates with cars. Teachers Larry and Patricia spoke of out-of-town students who couldn't afford to buy gas to attend their programs, and teacher Helen described one out-of-town student who walked for more than an hour to get to school each morning, because he couldn't get a ride. Student adviser Janice noted the difficulty that her First Nations students, in particular, had with housing because they did not always have financial sponsorship from their First Nation bands, and even if they were sponsored the funding level had not increased since 1992. She added that even if they could afford housing, most landlords set criteria of having a job and not having children or pets.

Staff in two ALCs explained that students who had incomes from employment could afford transportation and housing, but had difficulty attending classes. Student adviser Janice said that students who were employed in her community had "no alternative but to do independent courses from Manitoba Education, and try to work through 500 pages of English on their own." Teachers Helen and Bob worked in a program that had both day and evening classes to accommodate shift workers, but admitted that they could not always accommodate students who worked full time. Bob described students who "quit school because they get called in for extra shifts and miss too many classes."

ALC staff had seen both advantages and disadvantages in their students' relationships with family and friends. Student adviser Janice reported, "I tell the students, 'Don't be afraid to ask for favors from family while you're here, because you need them,'" and teacher Helen noted the essential role that family members played in providing "emergency babysitting." However, other teachers and directors warned of problems associated with students' out-of-school relationships, such as inadequate childcare, children with lice or problems at school, friends and partners who sabotage them, illness or death in the family, and domestic abuse. Teacher Patricia reported, "Family issues may keep them away from school for two or three days at a time." Director Kathy noted that in her core area program, "Learners make changes that the family sometimes does not like. The kids usually love it, but the other parent may feel that the person is moving on without them, or is becoming too independent and self-confident." Teacher Lisa in the same program added, "Friends may sabotage them by partying. Male partners will sabotage females by hiding their shoes, pick fights with them, haul them down, beat them up. Many students have come here all busted up and wearing sunglasses."

Other personal issues noted by ALC staff included addictions, court cases and incarceration, residential break-ins by neighbors, physical illness, and mental health issues. Teacher Larry explained simply, "Sometimes life gets in the way of learning." Although no community is immune from these problems, they were reported more often in ALCs that teacher Albert described as "low-income area, with immigrants and Aboriginals who are more likely to experience core area city problems such as violence, and less likely to access community resources." Albert's colleague Lisa associated their students' generally poor health to their low-income status: "Lots of students have health issues. A combination of possibly drinking and smoking and food choices related to poverty. Some have diagnosed illnesses, but most are just generally not well."

Family and friends dominated the ALC students' responses when I asked them about life challenges that affected their learning. Sara answered, "Personal stuff – my sister and my friends, sick kids, school closures because I have no daycare for my children in grades 2 and 4." Jack, Willa, and Carla said that they had difficulty doing homework because of interruptions by their children. Willa explained, "It's like 'Mom, Mom, Mom.' So I put my books away and say,

'Okay, no more homework. I'm all yours.' Then they stop and watch TV or play games or whatever. If I start my homework, they start up again." Carla added, "My daughter is only 10 months old, so she's pulling at my pants when I'm trying to write down a formula." Russell replied, "People in general get in my way, when they hear what I want to do and they kind of put me down for going back to school." Jeff was using the program as a mental diversion to help him recover from the trauma of having a friend die in his arms due to suicide. Jeff explained, "I couldn't save him. After that, I was lost. Going to school is helping me to find a way to live."

LIT Programs. LIT instructor Stella noted, "Our learners are adults, not kids who have no responsibilities, no obligations, and have freedom to do whatever they want." Coordinator Lyle wished, "If you could just take those challenges away and know your students could come here every day and not have to worry about things like 'How am I going to put food on my child's plate?'" He identified housing and daycare as such prevalent problems that he would not accept new students before they secured housing and childcare. Instructor Tina from the same LIT recalled, "When one of our students first moved here with her kids here for a better life, they lived in a car for 6 months." Most of the other coordinators and instructors also identified unstable housing and childcare as issues for many of their students. Coordinator Crystal explained, "Childcare is a huge issue in this town. For anybody, even if you're working, finding daycare is next to impossible. We try to make our program flexible enough that students can come when a family member can babysit."

LIT staff saw transportation as another hurdle for LIT students, in communities with public transit as well as those without. Coordinator Maria listed "the weather, distance from school, lack of transportation" as barriers to her students' attendance even though her community provided regular public bus service. Instructor Bart from the same program blamed some of his evening students' attendance issues on the program's "out-of-the-way location beside a railroad track" a city block away from the nearest bus stop. Coordinator Lyle in the same city said that his students' free bus passes were valid only from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., "which makes for a pretty short day. They get here at 9:30 and they need to leave at 2:30. Plus, they may have to go home to have lunch with their children, so that cuts into the day as well."

Several LIT staff admired their employed students for fitting program hours into their busy lives. Instructor Sally said, "It just amazes me. The motivation to improve themselves is so strong that as tired as they are, they'll still come here and work for another two hours, even though they've already had a full day at work." She added, "One lady gets up at 4 to be at work, works all day, goes home for supper, and then comes here for another couple of hours at night." Instructor Bart spoke of a student who "works full-time and does overtime because he has a family. One day last week, he showed up at 8:20. We close at 8:30, but he drove non-stop from work to come here for the ten minutes he could get."

By far the most prominent life issues that LIT staff reported were related to students' family and friends. Instructor LIT-FF listed as his students' biggest life challenge "their outside happenings – what they have invested in their own relations with friends and family." He and other LIT staff identified the following problems associated with these relationships: childcare, children who are sick or in the justice system, death in the family, spousal addictions, and other marital problems. However, coordinator Molly also pointed out the positive side of family: "It's showing their children how important education is. I believe that most of our program is family literacy."

Other personal issues reported by LIT staff included monetary concerns, alcohol and other addictions, physical and mental health problems, and general life circumstances. Instructor Bart said that his students had "the same hopes and dreams as anybody else, but they've had some

knocks along the way.” Instructor Bonnie described her learners as having “overwhelming personal needs,” with “such chaos in their lives that they just like to come here. They like the routine, coming to a place that’s always the same.” She and her colleague Bart reported a need to provide hot food for their students, and instructor Trysha said that her students walked home in pairs after evening classes as a safety initiative.

LIT students identified family as the macrosystem factor that most affected their learning. Several students described how their needs to accommodate school-age children shaped their own learning schedules. For example, Ivy said, “I can’t come on Fridays because I do the lunch program in my daughter’s school that day.” Charlie explained, “I need to do homework, but I also need to spend time with my kids. After they’re in bed, like from 9 until about 11, I’ll work on the books. And then I try to spend time with them on weekends.”

Other students mentioned interpersonal family issues as barriers to their attendance and concentration. Valerie said that she had a hard time learning “when I have personal problems. Like today, fighting with my teenage daughter.” Hope spoke of her unsupportive mother: “She’s like, ‘You can’t do that. You know you can’t do that. There’s no way you’ll handle that.’ It’s hard, because how do I know I can’t if I don’t try?” Jewel said that her family members consistently phoned her for help throughout the day: “I keep telling them, ‘Look, it’s only for two hours. You can contact me then, unless it’s an emergency.’” Eva reported that she had missed school to engage in family counseling “to straighten out the family at home, and then I’ll be okay here because I won’t be so stressed out all the time.”

A few LIT students described effects of their own physical and mental health issues. Ann reported missing school “if my arthritis is so bad I can’t move.” Hope and Amber explained absences due to bipolar disorder and social anxiety. Amber said, “If I miss school, I start justifying that I’m not getting anything out of this, and I get very negative. The illness of bipolar can get in the way of everything if I let it. I may stop coming altogether.”

ALC/LIT Programs. ALC/LIT staff did not articulate students’ problems with transportation, housing, employment, or relationships with family and friends, but they did report other personal concerns: addictions, physical and mental health, and financial needs. In the program that had continuous intake, teacher Dawn said, “Sometimes learners have to stop coming because of things in their home life, but we always assure them that they can always come back.” She added, “We say, ‘We’re really sorry that this isn’t working for you right now, but the door is always open.’ That’s really important.” In the other program, teacher Mandy explained, “Learners come with tons of baggage, things that are out of our control. Stuff that high school students don’t deal with because they’re living at home with mom and dad.” Teacher Mandy in the other ALC/LIT concluded, “There’s an art to teaching adults. It’s not always easy.”

None of the ALC/LIT students reported macrosystem issues that negatively affected their program participation, but two students credited family members for motivating them to participate. Shawna wanted to “come back to school and get it over while my son is still young.” Pauline reported, “If it hadn’t been for my kids, I don’t know where I would be now, with my dad’s death and everything. They are the ones who push me and get me out of bed every morning.”

SUMMARY

Part Two reported the research findings within the context of an ecological paradigm. Part Three uses the same theoretical conceptual framework to discuss these findings.

PART THREE DISCUSSION

This part of the research report responds to the research findings reported in Part Two, within the same ecosystem perspective (see Figure 1, p. 2). The microsystem consists of the core program types. The mesosystem consists of the programs' core design elements. The exosystem consists of the human elements that translate the core designs into practice. The macrosystem consists of factors that are beyond each program's control.

MICROSYSTEM

The microsystem adult education program types were the starting point for the mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem diversities in this study: Adult Learning Centre (ALC), Adult literacy program (LIT), and a combination ALC/LIT (see Figure 2, p. 10). ALCs are adult high schools, responsible for delivering Mature Student High School Diploma courses. LITs are adult literacy programs, with a broader mandate to offer generalized literacy skills development, support for specific academic and job preparation needs, and optional GED instruction. ALC/LITs are obliged to provide both adult high school and general literacy programming.

MESOSYSTEM

The mesosystem elements that were significant to this study were the adult education programs' status, finances, hours, courses/subjects, and intake procedures (see Figure 3, p. 10).

Status

In this research, status was defined in terms of each program's degree of independence and classroom location. I expected to find a correlation, such that incorporated programs would have more modest facilities within each program category (ALC, LIT, ALC/LIT), but thanks to the generosity of school divisions and community service agencies, there was no discernible correlation. I also expected to see a correlation between public bus schedules and evening program hours, but several programs in communities with daytime-only bus service still offered evening classes. As I anticipated, the LIT program facilities were significantly more humble than what the ALCs and ALC/LITs could afford.

The two ALC directors whose programs were affiliated with school divisions complained about their classroom facilities as being outdated and inadequate in contrast to their communities' K-12 schools, but they also credited their school divisions with providing school supplies and technological support. Both programs operated in communities with daytime-only bus service, so their evening students required independent transportation. The three college-affiliated ALCs enjoyed modern classrooms in buildings that offered auxiliary services such as counseling support and library resources, but two had out-of-the-way locations without public bus service. The remaining incorporated ALC enjoyed a modern facility on a public bus route.

LIT program facilities were, for the most part, decidedly more modest than the ALC facilities. Although the eight LIT coordinators in this study were satisfied with their locations, only one coordinator described her facility as ideal (despite the high rent). The other seven coordinators expressed appreciation for classrooms provided by school divisions and community service

agencies at little to no charge, including utilities and janitorial services. All eight LIT program sites were on public bus routes (daytime-only in two communities, one of which also offered evening classes). For all but the independent LIT program that paid high rent, being affiliated or incorporated made no difference to the programs' access to low-to-no-rent facilities. However, two LIT programs shared their delivery spaces with other programs and special events, which meant packing up and storing their resources between class sessions.

Of the two ALC/LITs in this study, one was incorporated; it offered daytime-only classes in a modest stand-alone facility that it had outgrown. The other was affiliated with a school division; it offered daytime and evening classes in a modern school building that it shared with grades 5-12 and college students. Both programs were centrally located, but neither had public bus service.

Finances

The finances that were considered in this research consisted of program income and teachers' salaries and benefits. As I expected, the ALCs and ALC/LITs had much higher income levels than the LITs, with commensurate differences in their reliance on other means of financial support, and most visibly in their teachers' salaries and benefits.

Income

Thanks to the *Adult Learning Centre Act*, Manitoba's ALCs receive provincial funding equivalent to what would normally be given to run a small public school. Nevertheless, the six ALCs in this study accessed additional financial support to meet their expenses. The incorporated program accessed other government grants, and the five affiliated programs accessed extra income (both actual and in-kind) from their affiliation colleges or school divisions. In addition, the incorporated and college-affiliated programs charged tuition fees per Mature Student Diploma course. Students in the incorporated ALC also engaged in fundraising for special events.

Because there is no act to legislate funding for LITs, they receive substantially lower grants from the provincial government. Of the eight LITs in this research, all but one relied on low-to-no-rent facilities provided by a local school division or community services agency. Four LITs accessed other government and community grants, and four LITs' students engaged fundraising to supplement their core funding: tag days, bake sales, etc. It was sometimes also possible to charge First Nation sponsors tuition fees for their students.

The ALC/LITs in this study received both ALC and LIT funding from the Province of Manitoba. The higher level of ALC income helped to cover any shortfalls that accrued from LIT income, so that students would receive the same levels of service (in the same facilities) regardless of whether they required ALC or LIT support. Nevertheless, teachers in both of this study's ALC/LITs expressed a need for more money. One ALC/LIT's students were expected to engage in fundraising for special events.

Salaries and Benefits

Because of their higher levels of provincial funding, ALCs in Manitoba can afford to pay their teachers according to the pay scales set by their host school divisions or community colleges, including the same paid hours and benefit packages: medical and dental coverage, retirement plans, etc. The one incorporated ALC in this research also had a set pay scale, but because the program had no additional support from an affiliation institution, its salaries were somewhat

lower than what its teachers would make in the local school division, without benefits or paid time off at Christmas or spring break.

The disparity in funding for ALCs and LITs is keenly evident in the salary differential. The salaries for certified teachers in this study's LIT programs ranged from \$15 to \$35 per hour, without benefits or paid time off at Christmas or spring break. Program hours further disadvantaged the LIT instructors economically, because most programs operated part-time. As a past provincial funding agent, I know that the 1990 minimum recommended salary for literacy instructors (who were not expected to have teaching certification at that time) was \$12 per hour – only \$3 less than certified teachers in LIT programs are making more than two decades later.

Like the ALCs, the salaries for ALC/LIT teachers in this research depended on their status as incorporated or affiliated. The incorporated ALC/LIT had a lower pay scale than its local school division, without benefits or paid time off at Christmas or spring break. The school-division affiliated ALC/LIT matched the pay scale of the school division, with the same benefits and paid time off at Christmas and spring break.

Hours

Program hours in this study were operationally defined as the number of hours that each program was open to students per week. I correctly anticipated that most of the ALCs and ALC/LITs could afford to operate full-time (operationally defined as 25+ hours each week), but that most of the LITs would be financially restricted to operate part-time. The availability of the facility, teachers, and students also played roles in determining program hours.

Of the six ALCs, all but one operated full-time and all but two provided evening class sessions. Finances and teacher availability restricted the part-time program's hours: the teaching director taught adult courses two evenings a week as part of her regular high school workload. One daytime-only ALC was located in a core area that was deemed too dangerous for students to attend at night. Teacher and student availability factored into another ALC's daytime-only hours: the teachers did not want to teach in the evenings, and evening course advertisements had attracted insufficient student registrations to be financially viable. This ALC also started at 8:30 every morning (a half-hour earlier than any other ALC) because the teachers wanted to arrive early so that they could leave earlier in the afternoon. This program's schedule begs the question, "Who do we serve – the teachers or the students?" because the start time posed significant challenges for parents who were not allowed to leave their children at school before 8:30 a.m., and for any students who did not have independent transportation.

Of the eight LITs, only three could afford to operate full-time, thanks to supplemental funding and in-kind support from affiliation organizations. All but one LIT was full to capacity: two maintained active waiting lists, and the other five scheduled their students to "take turns" coming to class. All but three LITs were open two evenings per week. One other core area LIT had started as a day-and-evening program, but the evening sessions were cancelled because the students were afraid to attend in the evening. Most instructors in the day-and-evening programs split their hours between the different time slots, unless they had other daytime jobs that precluded their working evening LIT shifts. "More hours" appeared at the top of many part-time students' wish lists for program improvement. Clearly, the provincial funding available to LITs is insufficient to meet the needs for literacy education in their communities, despite the programs' best efforts to operate on significantly pared budgets in comparison to ALCs.

The two ALC/LITs could definitely afford to operate full-time, thanks to receiving both ALC and LIT grants from the provincial government. One program was open daytime-only hours; the other also offered evening classes. Especially after interviewing the research participants from the eight LITs in this study, I have concluded that it is unfair for ALC/LITs to receive LIT funding in addition to the much more generous ALC funding. ALC/LITs can afford to operate full-time, in modern classrooms, without the LIT funding that our province's LIT programs so dearly need.

Courses/Subjects

ALCs provide high school courses with provincial curricula, and LITs provide more generalized skills training with curricula of their choice. I correctly anticipated that there would be a narrower range of differences between ALC course offerings, but I incorrectly anticipated that every LIT would offer a broad set of academic and student-specific learning options.

Within their mandate to use regular high school curricula, the number and configuration of courses varies, depending on the availability of instructional staff, local employer requirements, and specific course gaps in individual students' transcripts. Only one of the six ALCs in this study accommodated students who wished to combine adult and local high school courses, thus providing a much broader spectrum of courses than teaching director Barbara could deliver on her own. The other high-school affiliated ALC had a limited roster of courses that its two teachers and teaching director could deliver. In director Kathy's ALC, dual credit programming and apprenticeship credits reduced the number of "regular" adult high school courses, but directors Karen and Kaye used dual credit college programming to expand their students' course options. As well, Karen and Kaye essentially "borrowed" community college instructors to meet their students' employment needs for specific mathematics and science courses. Only one student in this study complained of limited course offerings, because she wanted more computer instruction to prepare for post-program clerical work.

By virtue of their mandate to serve individual students' learning needs, LITs cover a wider spectrum of course content than ALCs. Nevertheless, the eight LITs in this study varied considerably in their services, depending on the individual coordinator. I was surprised to discover that coordinator Molly, for example, offered just math and language arts, divided between herself and another instructor according to a prescribed schedule. The other LITs offered a wider range of learning options, based on the students' incoming skills and goals. For instance, the five LITs that offered GED test preparation were obliged to cover the core subject areas of the GED tests – math, science, social studies, and language arts – with students of various schooling backgrounds. Seven LIT coordinators also catered to students' needs for more personalized instruction based on their life needs (such as employment skills and drivers' licensing) and academic goals (such as trades course preparation and ALC course support). In these LITs, the breadth and depth of instruction was dictated by what the learners wanted and needed, tempered by what the literacy staff could – and would – teach.

The two ALC/LITs in this research offered comparable sets of high school courses, but they differed significantly in their literacy programming. The ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program offered its literacy students individualized special interest programming and GED in addition to high school preparation. The ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC program offered its literacy students high school skills preparation only.

Intake

The differences in this study's program intake processes related to their recruitment, intake schedules, and enrolment procedures. I overestimated the extent to which ALC recruitment would be connected to their affiliations with public schools and community colleges, and LIT recruitment would be connected to their local ALCs. I correctly predicted that ALCs would have semester-based intake schedules, that LITs would have continuous intake, and ALC/LITs would have intake schedules commensurate with their initial programming focus. I was surprised to discover the extent to which both ALCs and LITs relied on testing in their enrolment procedures.

Recruitment

I assumed that most ALC registrations would result from inquiring about grade 12 completion in a local high school or from being denied entry to a community college due to skills deficits and/or lack of a high school diploma. However, the six ALCs in this study attributed most of their student enrolment to word of mouth and agency referrals, primarily due to their status as well-known entities in the community. Only one ALC director indicated a need to recruit more actively, not to fill her classes but to attract lower income residents who were not being served at the time of the research. However, it is highly unlikely that such residents would attend this daytime-only program located on the outskirts of a community without public transportation.

LIT registrations typically rely on the programs' visibility, core area accessibility, and reputation with community agencies. All but one of the eight LITs in this study were full (or overfull), thanks primarily to word of mouth supplemented by referrals from community agencies and educational institutions. Only two LIT coordinators reported relying on referrals from their local ALCs: one LIT was across the street from an ALC, and the other received provincial funding routed through an ALC. Two other LIT coordinators used fund-raising as a means to enhance their community profiles for recruitment purposes. Three LIT coordinators expressed an interest in recruiting more residents from under-served populations in the community, but only one of these programs had room for more students.

The two ALC/LIT directors in this study were confident that their programs had remarkably high community profiles. Word of mouth and agency referrals supplemented their own internal reciprocations between the two types of programming.

Intake Schedules

As I expected, the ALCs in this study paralleled their local high schools' semester schedules. Five accepted new students (space permitting) at the beginning of each semester; the sixth accepted new students only at the beginning of each academic year. None of the ALC research participants suggested more flexible intakes as a means to replace students who withdrew between semesters – not even Steve, the ALC director who admitted that after accepting 18 new students each fall, “We know that within a week or two, those 18 people will be down to 11 or 12.” Several ALC directors in this research expressed confidence that adults in their communities would be determined enough to return at the next intake if they could not register during their first attempt. All appeared to accept attrition as typical of high school delivery.

Also as I expected, the LITs in this study operated on a continuous intake basis. Six LITs welcomed all adults who wished to come, even if that meant attending only a few hours each week. Coordinator Sheila explained, “You can't have someone come in on a Monday and tell that person to come back on Friday, let alone a few weeks later. The idea has left. You have to

take them when they're ready." The remaining two LITs operated full-time with enrolment quotas; these programs kept waiting lists in order to fill vacancies. Continuous intake schedules prevented drops in enrolment when students left due to achieving their learning goals or dropping out for other reasons.

The ALC/LIT programs in this research maintained the same intake schedules that they had when they started as either an ALC or LIT – for both ALC and LIT students. The fact that one ALC/LIT had continuous intake shows that this type of intake schedule is possible for ALCs, but it is dependent on the program's capacity to provide individualized instruction for ALC students.

Enrolment Procedures

Academic skills assessment dominated most of the ALCs' enrolment procedures. For five of the six ALCs, high school transcripts revealed gaps to be filled by Mature Student Diploma courses. Four of these ALCs supplemented the transcript information with standardized CAAT-C or CAAT-D skills assessments. The sixth ALC relied on the standardized ABLE test to identify skills deficits, although director Kathy admitted that she relied more on the students' personal readiness for learning and commitment to her ALC's cultural orientation than on their academic readiness as her criteria for acceptance to the program. ABLE is also much lower than CAAT (and CAAT-D) on the scale of difficulty for standardized skills tests designed for adults. Kathy and two other ALC directors reported using intake interviews as an enrolment procedure.

Life and learning skills assessments dominated the LIT programs' enrolment procedures. The eight LIT coordinators reported using intake interviews primarily to ease students into the learning context and determine attendance schedules, in addition to choosing the appropriate skills assessment tools. The LITs' academic skills assessments ranged from informal inventories and writing samples to standardized ABLE (1 and 2) and CAAT (B and C) assessments – some of which came as referral documents from local ALCs. Only one LIT coordinator reported refusing entry to his program; he assessed applicants' readiness for learning on the basis of whether they had a stable residence and steady income.

The ALC/LITs relied on high school transcripts and standardized tests for their ALC students. Because its LIT students were preparing for ALC programming, one ALC/LIT conducted the same standardized tests with its LIT applicants. The other ALC/LIT used less formal skills assessments with its LIT applicants. Both programs relied heavily on intake interviews to determine learner readiness and set goals for both ALC and LIT students.

EXOSYSTEM

The most important exosystem elements in this study were the programs' staff, instruction, students, student supports, and classroom atmosphere (see Figure 4, p. 23).

Staff

Excluding solely administrative positions, staff in this study's adult education programs held either teaching or other nonteaching positions on site. I knew that all ALC instructors would be certified teachers, but I underestimated the number of certified teachers who were employed in the LIT programs. Also, although I expected to find a variety of nonteaching personnel in the ALCs, I was surprised to meet paid child care workers in two LITs.

All staff members reported high levels of satisfaction with their program positions. Because of the programs' very different working conditions, both within and between the ALC and LIT delivery options represented in this study, I was drawn to question whether certain types of teachers suit particular types of students and/or program contexts. It seems to me that the most successful programs have the most productive and happiest staff members, so the task of program administrators is twofold: to meet the needs of both staff and students at the same time.

Teaching Positions

Only certified teachers can teach ALC courses, because high school courses require provincial accreditation. Most of the ALC teachers in this study were seasoned subject-area specialists. They reported a distinct preference for working in an ALC instead of a school division high school, but because of their familiarity with regular high schools they accepted their ALCs' semester set-ups and intake schedules. Although they sympathized with their students' reasons for dropping out, none suggested alternatives that might reduce attrition. Indeed, several teachers wished that their ALCs would tighten the attendance regulations so that students-at-risk would be forced to leave earlier each term.

Most of the LIT instructors in this research were also certified teachers with school division teaching experience. They, too, preferred to work with adults, despite their drastically reduced salaries. Uncertified instructors taught in six of the eight LITs, and volunteer tutors provided additional teaching support in two LITs. None complained about the inconvenience of their programs' continuous intake. Instead, several described this process as essential to welcoming adults when they were ready to learn. They also expressed admiration for each other's efforts to meet all students' needs in what Trysha described as a "nonstop action setting" with simultaneous individual and small-group instruction across all subject areas at the same time.

Each ALC/LIT in this study hired certified, subject-area specialist teachers and an uncertified tutor. The teaching staff in the ALC/LIT program that had started as a LIT accepted what Dawn described as the "beautiful mosaic" of mixing all levels of students and teachers in the same classroom, bringing new students seamlessly into the mix, and welcoming back students who "stepped out" for periods of time throughout the year. The teaching staff in the other ALC/LIT accepted the physical division of labor between their subject areas and between their ALC and LIT students.

Other Positions On Site

Most ALCs that operate within host community colleges and school divisions have immediate access to student support workers (such as counselors) and other nonteaching staff (such as secretaries). The other ALCs have budgets that may accommodate some of these services on site, and they refer students to community service agencies as appropriate. Of the six ALCs in this study, five had access to student support workers and one had child care services on site.

LITs that operate within host organizations (such as Friendship Centres) may also have access to those organizations' support workers, but most LITs do not. The most vulnerable students need the most nonteaching resources – but LIT programs don't have the finances to provide these nonteaching positions. They compensate by referring students to external community service agencies. Only two of the eight LITs in this study had onsite access to student support workers; two others paid for child care on site as needed.

The ALC/LIT that operated independently hired an administrative assistant, and it referred students to offsite community service agencies as appropriate. The ALC/LIT located in a school had onsite secretarial support, a psychologist, and child care – all of which director Theresa considered essential to her program's success.

Instruction

In this research, instruction was reported in terms of teaching schedules, methods, and resources. I was surprised that the ALCs' class times so closely paralleled public high schools, and that the LITs' teaching schedules were so diverse. I correctly predicted the following methodology patterns: teacher-centred group instruction in ALCs and learner-centred individualized instruction in LITs. I did not anticipate the extent to which ALC programs would rely on WebCT course materials, or the degree of the controversy over Stages curricula in LIT programs.

Schedule

The six ALCs had course-specific class time slots. In the five ALCs that had more than one teacher (and more than one classroom), each teacher worked with a different student group in each slot – and students were expected to attend all of the time slots assigned to them. Math-science teachers in the two ALCs that were situated in community colleges delivered more than one course in each slot, with students using independent study materials for each course. The teaching director in the sixth ALC (which had just one classroom) had separate class times for English and math courses, with other students using independent study materials for different subject areas at the same time.

Of the eight LITs, only one had subject-specific class times in different rooms, with the ELA and math instructors taking turns working with groups of students during the two afternoons that the daytime portion of the program was open each week. In this LIT's evening hours, and in the other LITs' daytime and evening hours, students attended an open area classroom with teachers responding to individual students' learning needs. One full-time LIT also periodically scheduled special interest group instruction, and another full-time LIT had short periods of math and social studies instruction at the beginning of each class day. LIT students' attendance schedules ranged from totally scheduled (in the one LIT that had course specific afternoon time slots), through individually scheduled (in the six LITs that had more students altogether each week than there were chairs in the room), to totally unscheduled (in the one LIT that had room for more students).

In this study, the ALC/LIT programs' course schedules appeared to depend on whether the program had started as an ALC or as a LIT. The ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT offered discrete course options to its ALC students, and more generalized instruction to its LIT students, neither according to a set timetable (within an open area classroom) – same as most literacy programs. In this program, students attended according their own availability. The ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC offered discrete course options to both ALC and LIT students according to a set timetable (within separate classrooms) – same as a regular high school. In this program, students were expected to attend every time slot assigned to them.

Method

Teacher-centred group instruction typified the ALCs' instruction, perhaps because of their teachers' past training and experience. High school teachers are accustomed to providing large-

group instruction, followed by individual and small-group work during set class times. This instructional method depends on having all students complete the same coursework with the same deadlines for assignments, so that students complete their courses within semestered time frames. Three of the six ALCs provided teacher-centred individual instruction during evening hours, with modularized course materials so that students could pick up where they left off if they had attendance issues or if they needed more than one semester to complete a course. I left every ALC interview wishing that all ALCs would provide modularized individual instruction (in addition to their group-based teaching) as a means to facilitate more flexible intake schedules, so that new students could enrol to fill vacancies between semesters. Some of the ALC students in this research also asked for more personalized instruction, as a means to answer their questions in a more timely manner.

Learner-centred individualized instruction was more common in the LITs. One reason could be that instructors with experience teaching children in younger grades feel more comfortable focusing on skills acquisition than on course deadlines for completion. A more likely reason is that LIT programs must respond to their students' attendance patterns in addition to their disparate skills. As coordinator Martha explained, "You have to take learners for who they are, where they are in their learning, and when they come in." Only one LIT provided primarily group instruction, within the context of its clearly divided math and ELA classes. The others designed group lessons as "add-ons" to their normal daily routines, for special interest programming or to enhance the students' socialization. Several of the LIT students in this research mentioned how much they enjoyed these group interactions. I came away from my LIT interviews thinking that additional group instruction, although difficult to schedule, would be especially helpful for students with goals of attending an ALC or community college.

The ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program provided primarily learner-centred instruction. It had added high school instruction as an opportunity for community adults to acquire Adult 12 certification without having to attend a regular high school, so it was not focused on reproducing a high school delivery format. This program's ALC and LIT students experienced flexible instruction, with all students learning together in the same room at the same time. The ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC program provided primarily group-based instruction in distinct time slots. Tutor Julie explained, "Our courses are run as courses. Deadlines are deadlines. Due dates are due dates." This program had added literacy instruction as a means to upgrade skills in students who were not ready for the ALC. Both ALC/LIT directors credited their literacy programming for enriching their ALCs: the first because mixing the ALC and literacy students together created a community of learners who valued each other regardless of their academic skill levels, and the second because students who completed the literacy program were better prepared for adult high school courses.

Resources

The ALCs delivered high school courses with provincially approved textbooks and other learning materials, including WebCT distance delivery lessons. As well, the ALC teachers developed their own resources in order to enrich their instruction with adult and/or Aboriginal content. Teachers from three ALCs reported a heavy reliance on WebCT courses as a means to reduce preparation time and/or expand their course offerings. The teachers who were familiar with technology-based instruction expressed a need for more technology resources, such as computers and smart boards.

The LITs delivered general skills and special interest instruction with primarily teacher-made resources organized in files for repeated use. Coordinators Martha, Nancy, and Sheila were

particularly grateful to literacy instructors who had passed their resources along at retirement. Nancy explained, "She made it so much easier for me to start. She taught me how to use the files and how to add to them. Now I will have an even more extensive collection to pass along to my replacement in a few years." I knew that different program coordinators would have differing levels of commitment to (or against) the Stages curricula developed by the Province, but I was surprised by the depth of this commitment. Four coordinators supported Stages wholeheartedly, three flatly refused to consider Stages, one pretended to use Stages as a "framework" on her report forms, and one had adopted the Essential Skills curriculum from Entrepreneurship and Trades, instead. The LIT coordinators' wish lists for resources focused on consumables (such as stationery supplies) that were difficult to accommodate on the programs' limited budgets.

The ALC/LITs had access to the same high school resources from their local school divisions, and they both used Stages as the basis for their LIT instruction. However, the ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program, and which offered a broader range of LIT skills instruction, also relied heavily on teacher-made materials for both ALC and LIT students. Teacher Dawn explained, "I individualize the learning with my own resources, in English especially. I adjust the content for adult interest and for the students' personal likes." The ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC program expanded its high school course options with WebCT course materials, but teacher Glenn found the Stages curricula sufficient to prepare his LIT students for post-literacy ALC instruction.

Students

The student research data, as reported by staff and students, focused on the students' incoming goals, changes in goals, other changes, and learning issues. I did not expect that these pockets of information would so closely parallel each other in ALC and LIT students. However, as ALC/LIT teacher Mandy articulated, "Adults are adults, with the same hopes and dreams, and the same problems, regardless of whether they're in high school or they're upgrading to get into high school."

Incoming Goals

Most of the ALC students had an immediate academic goal of completing grade 12, and many had post-secondary community college or university goals that would lead to employment. Some already had grade 12, but they wanted to retake courses or take new courses in order to make themselves more employable or to gain access to post-secondary trades programs that required certain high school courses. A few others had no real academic motivation of their own, but were forced into an ALC in order to qualify for continued Workers' Compensation income. Teacher Albert suspected that several of his sponsored students were motivated by their student allowances, instead of any real desire to go back to school.

The ALC students' personal goals were tied to friends, family, and culture. One student was going to school to give himself something else to think about besides his friend's suicide. Female students frequently reported wanting to serve as role models and make a better life for their children. Some spoke of wanting to help their children with homework in high school. Students in the culture-focused ALC wanted to learn more about their culture; one of these students spoke of using her knowledge to break the cycle of violence and despair created by residential schools.

Several LIT students had many of the same academic, employment, and personal goals as ALC students, complicated by their lower incoming levels of schooling. They needed to improve their

literacy skills before they could enter an ALC, which delayed their timeline for post-secondary education and employment. GED offers a speedier alternative to the Adult 12, but it has a questionable reputation because it does not meet all employers' or post-secondary institutions' grade 12 requirements. Other LIT students had less lofty academic and job goals, which required improved literacy skills but not necessarily GED or Adult 12. A few were reluctant learners, forced to attend by their social assistance workers.

Perhaps because their trajectory for employment was so long term, a few female LIT students conveyed unrealistic career goals. Ella wanted to drive a semi-truck, but she admitted, "I don't have a driving licence and I wouldn't trust myself to drive in the city." Deanna wanted to become a massage therapist, but she had no idea what education she would need. Deanna added, "I've been doing this since I was a little girl, giving people massages. It's a gift that I was born with, so that's what I want to do. Work with people who've been in car accidents."

Similarly to the ALC students, many of the LIT students' personal goals were tied to their families. Male and female students spoke of wanting to be role models and help their elementary school children with homework. Ann wanted to teach her children that it is possible to get off welfare. Other female students were learning to read to their younger children or grandchildren. Self-esteem featured prominently in several interviews. Charlie attested, "I just want to better myself. To prove that I can do it."

The ALC/LIT students' goals paralleled those of students in the other ALC and LIT programs. Interestingly, the goals reported in the ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program were more similar to the other LIT programs' students, and the goals reported in the ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC program were more similar to the other ALC programs' students. For example, Alice (who needed just two more electives to complete her Mature Student Diploma in the first ALC/LIT) said that she was completing grade 12 as proof that she could do it, for its own sake. Alice did not report having any specific post-program goals. The students in the other ALC/LIT reported only specific goals related to their post-secondary education and/or employment.

Changes in Learning and Employment Goals

What was enlightening in this research was not just that students' academic and job goals increased as they spent more time in their adult education programs, but that other students' goals decreased as a result of their program experiences.

ALC staff and students reported that successes in Mature Student Diploma courses inspired many students to consider post-program vocational training, which could mean changing some of their high school courses in order to meet post-secondary entry requirements. Other students' less successful experiences convinced them that their initial plans were unrealistic, and they adjusted their high school course plans and post-program goals accordingly.

LIT staff and students also said that students raised or lowered their program and post-program goals in accordance with their learning successes and failures. For example, successful learners would change their incoming goals from GED to Adult 12 – or even post-secondary education. Students who entered with basic skills development goals often increased their aspirations to include GED or Adult 12 once they realized that they could learn skills that had eluded them before they dropped out of junior or senior high school. Other students who entered with unrealistic ideas of moving quickly into GED preparation or Adult 12 developed

shorter term plans to develop discrete skills that would prepare them for post-program employment or for eventual completion of the GED or Adult 12.

ALC/LIT staff and students made similar comments about changes in students' goals at the LIT and ALC levels of programming. An advantage in the ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program was that students could move fluidly between literacy instruction and Mature Student Diploma courses in accordance with their skills, because all learning occurred in the same classroom with the same teachers. For example, a student could be Stage 2 ELA at the same time as a high school math course, and could receive extra math literacy tutoring as needed. An advantage in the ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC program was that all of the literacy students were preparing to enter the ALC, and they had already undergone intake procedures that assessed their readiness for this preparation. The students in this ALC/LIT were less likely to change their Adult 12 goals.

Other Changes in Students

Questions about other changes in ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT students elicited similar responses related to academic and personal growth: academic self-confidence, willingness to learn, personal self-esteem, communication skills, improved hygiene, etc. The differences were mostly a matter of degree, in direct proportion to the disparities engendered by students' incoming education and associated economically driven life circumstances.

ALC students had already experienced some academic success, at least to the point of entering high school, but they developed a new confidence in their abilities to learn as they met successively more advanced learning goals in their adult education programs. Teacher Ken related the following example, "One student who came the first day in tears is one of the best in class now. She says to other students, 'You've got to make the commitment.' She did, and she's doing very, very well. She's developed that inner drive." When student Dean declared, "Everything's got to mean something," he expressed the same sentiments as other ALC students who spoke of finding a new meaning in their personal lives due to their adult high school experiences.

LIT students enter their adult education programs with a broader range of schooling experiences, so it is not surprising that their changes in academic and personal self-image can be more dramatic. Instructor Lily enthused, "Learning to read is huge. It means everything to that person. It changes their whole sense of self and where they belong in this world." Several LIT staff spoke of students who needed someone to walk with them through the door when they first came to their programs, but who had developed self-esteem to the point that they felt confident interacting with their children's teachers and advocating for themselves in meetings with their social service agents. Instructor Lily added, "Just deciding to get a job is huge if you're used to living on social assistance." Student Ivy's joyful sentiment "I'm a much happier person now" was repeated throughout this study's LIT learner transcripts.

ALC/LIT staff and students reported the same academic and personal changes as in the other adult education programs in this research. Teacher Glenn noted, "It's my primary objective in the first few weeks to build trust, to build faith that I care, and that they will succeed." In addition to focusing on individual students' changes in self-concept as learners, the other ALC teachers and tutor emphasized these students' increasing sense of respect for others in the program and out in the community. The students also reported feeling more positive about themselves and about the new roles that they were developing in their families.

Learning Issues

Staff and students alike identified learning issues that reflected individual disparities in ability and readiness to learn. The following issues occurred at every adult education level, but some were more common in the ALCs and others were more pronounced in the LITs: learning disabilities (LDs), lack of educational preparation, and reluctance to learn.

ALC students experienced a relatively narrow range of learning issues. For example, no ALC participants spoke of LDs as a learning issue, although it may be assumed that adult high school students live with the same LDs as adolescents in public and private high schools. The expectation of grade 9 as a prerequisite for entering grade 10, combined with the programs' intake screenings, should theoretically have prevented a lack of educational preparation. In every community represented in this study, ALCs had the opportunity to refer academically unprepared students to LIT and/or other adult upgrading services. ALC directors and teachers observed instances of reluctance to learn as manifested in failure to attend (or attend on time), boredom in class, disinterest in the lesson materials, unconcern for completing grade 12, and fear of learning based on past schooling experiences. ALC student Lara admitted a reluctance to learn when she blamed her learning difficulties on her own procrastination. A logical assumption would be that students who were disinterested in their previous high school courses would not necessarily develop a motivation to learn the same subject matters that were required in an ALC's mature high school diploma.

LIT students experienced a wider range of learning issues that had more noticeable effects on their ability and readiness to learn. The LDs that hindered success in their literacy upgrading had likely played key roles in their decisions to drop out of school. Lyle was the only LIT coordinator who reported no LDs in his students – because he referred “students with those challenges” to other LITs in the same community. The other LIT coordinators lamented that most of their students' LDs had not been identified (and thus had remained unaddressed) in grade school. Although academic preparation was definitely relevant to LIT students' learning, the nature of LIT programming meant that academic shortcomings did not pose a barrier to their learning at whatever levels were indicated by their intake assessments. Reluctance to learn manifested as fear of learning by anxious learners who evinced learned helplessness as a result of unsatisfactory prior schooling experiences. No LIT participants identified disinterest as a learning issue, presumably because they were being taught what they wanted to learn in close consideration of their incoming skills and immediate learning goals.

ALC/LIT students experienced the same learning issues as students in the ALC and LIT programs. Staff in the ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program reported more learning barriers posed by LDs, whereas staff in the ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC program reported more learning problems associated with academic preparation. Directors and teachers in both programs related examples of reluctance to learn, based on both disinterest and fear of failure.

Student Supports

Of the various non-academic supports that the ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs provided to students, food was listed by both staff and students as the best feature in programs that offered that support. Other supports with financial implications were transportation, off-site child care, GED test fees, emergency funding, and food banks. In general, ALCs, which had significantly higher budgets than LITs, offered fewer supports – but their students were also more likely to have access to these supports externally by virtue of their sponsorship agreements. Interestingly,

while ALC director Barbara insisted that her “wealthy community” students did not need non-academic supports, LIT coordinator Sheila in the same community hosted periodic potluck lunches with “foods that the learners can’t afford to buy.”

Only two ALCs provided food as part of their daily program delivery. Students in these programs expressed great appreciation for the breakfast and snack foods, and regularly scheduled bannock lunches. Students in a third ALC were welcome to attend cultural feasts that the program hosted. One ALC provided daily school bus transportation for qualifying students. Three other ALCs provided periodic transportation by means of bus tickets or a staff member’s private vehicle. Of the two ALCs had small emergency funding budgets, one also maintained an emergency food bank.

Seven LITs provided food as part of their program delivery, ranging from coffee and snack foods to periodic potluck lunches, to lunches every day courtesy of two LITs’ host agencies. Instructor Bart reported, “We have snacks at night comes, and we have 12 cups of coffee that we charge them a penny. One gentleman comes in and goes to the kitchen, and I don’t know if that man is starving but he eats a lot.” LIT students Greg and Amber noted the role that food played in offering “hospitality” and a chance to “socialize.” Six LITs provided transportation in the form of bus tickets or periodic taxi fares, one paid for off-site child care, and three paid their students’ GED test fees.

The ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program provided daily coffee and breakfast foods, and access to a fridge and microwave. Both ALC/LITs provided daily school bus transportation to qualifying students; one also gave students emergency transportation to medical appointments.

Atmosphere

The research participants identified an adult learning atmosphere as what set their programs apart from other educational services in their communities. Staff and students at all academic levels described their classrooms as “safe,” “homey,” and “validating,” thanks to “caring teachers” who engaged in “reciprocal interpersonal relationships” grounded in respect and unwavering commitment to students’ success. Small class sizes created a climate for students to learn from each other and become friends. The appreciable differences among the ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs in this study came not from summations of their interview responses, but from the examples that they used to explain their comments.

The ALC learning environments were comparatively more businesslike, with scheduled classes for different subject areas in separated classrooms for all but the one ALC that had just one classroom. Their coffee areas (when available) were physically separated from the classroom spaces. Staff and student descriptions of safety focused on being academically safe places to learn. One student’s example of flexibility was having an instructor help her with assignments over the lunch hour.

In contrast, most of the LIT programs were comparatively more relaxed, with coffee and snacks provided within a common classroom space. The explanations of safety included a physically “safe place to come” as well as an emotionally and academically safe place to learn. Staff and students extolled their programs’ flexibility in order to accommodate learners’ diverse academic skill levels and attendance schedules.

The ALC/LIT learning atmospheres reflected their respective LIT and ALC roots. The ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program had a common classroom with coffee and breakfast foods.

Teacher Dawn identified as her program's best feature the way that ALC and LIT students worked together, regardless of their skill levels. Staff and students described this program as physically, emotionally, and academically "safe." They also noted as significant the program's flexible learning schedules for both ALC and LIT students. On the other hand, the ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC program had separate classrooms and no student coffee room. Tutor Julie interpreted "safe" in terms of the students' emotional and academic "comfort level," and she noted the teachers' flexibility in including individual students' life experiences in their instruction.

MACROSYSTEM

The macrosystem components that emerged in the research were provincial government funders, local community stakeholders, and students' personal lives (see Figure 5, p. 46).

Provincial Government Funders

ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs rely on funding from the Government of Manitoba's Adult Learning and Literacy (ALL) branch for most of their budgetary requirements. In addition to the funding issues reported elsewhere in this report, the adult education program directors/coordinators in this research focused on the interpersonal interactions and paperwork attached to their relationships with provincial government funders. I anticipated that LIT coordinators would complain about their numerous reports due to ALL every year, but I was surprised when the ALC directors also complained about their once-a-year grant renewal applications.

ALCs interact with ALC funding agents. The ALC directors in this study did not comment on their interactions with the ALC funding agents assigned to their programs, but some objected to sending grant renewal applications by postal mail every year. Suggestions included fax or electronic submissions, preferably every second or third year.

LITs interact with ALP funding agents. The LIT coordinators in this study lauded the relationships that their funding agents had developed with them and others (staff, students, and board members) attached to their programs. However, most coordinators also expressed dissatisfaction with the number and length of reports they had to submit in order to access funding, including two sets of statistics reports and a variety of other accountability reports due at different times throughout the year.

ALC/LITs interact with funding agents who serve both roles. The ALC/LIT directors in this study reported having contact with their funding agents, but did not comment on the quality of this interaction. They also did not comment on the frequency or level of detail required in their funding applications.

Local Community Stakeholders

In addition to students' families and significant others, the research participants identified the following stakeholders in their communities: the local school division, adult education programs, government and community service agencies, and student sponsors.

All of the ALC directors reported maintaining valuable relationships with their local school division, college, and government/community service agencies. All but one ALC director also reported having positive and ongoing relationships with at least one local LIT, including cross-

program student referrals. The other ALC director, however, evinced disdain for LITs and for LIT students. This director did not acknowledge the many referrals that her program received from the local LIT, and appeared to regard her own adult high school students as somehow more academically worthy of service.

All of the LIT coordinators mentioned relationships with ALCs, LITs, and a variety of other government and community service agencies, particularly in connection with individual students who had been referred externally. They appreciated their programs' role as a stepping stone to further education and employment in the community. Only one LIT coordinator reported having received no referrals from her local ALC, although she had referred several of her own students to that ALC.

Both of the ALC/LIT directors positioned their programs in the centre of their communities' matrices of educational, social, and employment opportunities. They relied on their programs' well-earned reputations as a source of validation for their services.

Students' Personal Lives

The personal concerns identified by staff and students in this research were consistent across ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs: transportation, housing, employment, family and friends, other personal issues. Instructor Peter affirmed, "Our students are adults, so they have adult issues." I was wrong to expect that students' educational experiences would be less affected by personal life issues at progressively higher levels of adult education. The research participants taught me that in a society wherein employment dictates lifestyle and is predicated on grade 12 completion, anything less than grade 12 is significant.

ALC research participants noted the transportation problems in communities without bus service, particularly in out-of-the-way locations. Housing issues were exacerbated for First Nations students not only because landlords had employment and "no children or pets" policies, but because band sponsorship levels had not changed since 1992. Because of the ALCs' set class times, shift work created attendance problems for employed students, even in the four ALCs that offered evening classes. Family and friends could be educational assets or liabilities, depending on whether they provided emotional and other support or posed problems related to childcare, spousal sabotage, etc. Core area residents were particularly subject to physical and mental health problems: poor nutrition, addictions, incarceration, neighborhood break-ins.

LIT research participants reported transportation difficulties because of their programs' distance from bus stops at night and the time restrictions placed on student bus passes. Housing was a constant concern for low-income students. The LITs' flexible scheduling facilitated attendance by employed students. Family and friends could be supportive or unsupportive, providing childcare and role model motivation, etc., or drawing students' attention away to marital problems, children's illnesses, legal and financial concerns, etc. Basic needs for food, safety, and physical and mental health preoccupied many LIT students.

ALC/LIT research participants echoed the ALC and LIT participants concerns over money, physical and mental health, and addictions. At the same time, they credited students' family members for giving them a motivation to succeed, in order to serve as role models and improve their children's lives.

SUMMARY

Part Three discussed the research findings from an ecosystem perspective grounded in Bronfenbrenner's ecological paradigm. Part Four closes this report with a set of conclusions and recommendations for practice and further research.

PART FOUR CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions and recommendations are drawn from the discussion of findings within the context of an ecosystem model based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological paradigm (see Figure 1, p. 2).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This section of the report pairs the research conclusions with recommendations for practice.

Microsystem

The Government of Manitoba advocates – and funds – three strong models for the delivery of adult high school and literacy education: Adult Learning Centre (ALC), adult literacy (LIT), and a combination ALC/LIT (see Figure 2, p. 10). These models cover a range of services that extend from entry level academics to grade 12. However, other delivery models may also be deserving of government recognition that would include financial support. For instance, church and other community groups provide one-to-one and group-based literacy instruction to various target groups: seniors, immigrants, low-income residents, etc. Almost three decades have passed since Manitoba Education chose to support ALCs and community-based LITs as the preferred adult education delivery models. It is time for a research-based review.

Recommendation 1. That the Government of Manitoba conduct research into other types of adult education in the province, with the goal of determining whether the services that they provide to supplement ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs warrant their own provincial funding.

Mesosystem

The following mesosystem elements were significant to this study's adult education programs: status, finances, hours, courses/subjects, and intake procedures (see Figure 3, p. 10).

Status

Program location was the status-determining element that most visibly separated ALCs and LITs. Although some ALCs also disparaged their delivery spaces, the LITs had markedly more humble facilities. Two of these LITs shared their classrooms, so they had to pack up and store all of their teaching resources between teaching sessions.

Recommendation 2. That the Government of Manitoba ensure that all provincially funded adult education programs have funding sufficient to meet their facility needs. This means providing financial support not only on the basis of a program's productivity but also in accordance with the availability of delivery facilities in the community.

Some LITs were in their locations by choice, preferring more modest independent facilities to being housed in schools or post-secondary institutions, but others had no viable alternatives. The prettiest facilities in the world are not worth the trade-off if they are not conveniently located or are housed in buildings that adult learners are reluctant to enter.

Recommendation 3. That ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs carefully prioritize their needs when they search for suitable facilities. Compromises may need to be made in relation to community location and facility amenities.

Finances

As a direct consequence of Manitoba's Adult Learning Centre Act, ALCs receive significantly more monetary support than LITs. The effects of this disparity are reflected in every aspect of programming, including salaries. Certified teacher salaries in most of this study's ALCs were commensurate with public school salaries in their communities, but certified teacher salaries in the LITs ranged from \$15 to \$35 per hour, without benefits or paid time off during school breaks.

Recommendation 4. That the Government of Manitoba pass an Adult Literacy Act equivalent to the Adult Learning Centre Act, with the goal of ensuring parity for provincially funded adult education programs.

It is decidedly unfair that ALC/LITs can augment their generous ALC incomes with LIT grants that would otherwise be divided among LIT-only programs. ALC/LITs can afford to operate full-time in modern classrooms, while most LIT programs are financially restricted to part-time hours in substandard facilities.

Recommendation 5. That the Government of Manitoba restrict ALC/LITs to apply for just one avenue of funding: either ALC or LIT, not both.

Hours

Primarily due to ALC and LIT provincial funding disparities, seven of the eight ALCs and ALC/LITs in this study operated full-time, but only three of the eight LITs operated full-time.

Recommendation 6. That measures be taken to raise Manitoba's LIT grants to the level of its ALC grants, with the goal of increasing the programs' hours of operation.

The differences in ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT programming hours were attributed to teacher and student availability. One ALC located on the outskirts of a community without bus service started at 8:30 a.m. (instead of the 9:00 a.m. that typified the other adult education programs' morning hours), because the teachers wanted to start and end earlier in the day. The 9:00 a.m. start time created scheduling conflicts for students who had school-age children and those who lacked independent transportation.

Recommendation 7. That ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs prioritize their students' needs over their teachers' preferences when determining hours of operation.

Courses/Subjects

Manitoba's ALCs are adult high schools. They offer courses to complete the Mature Student High School Diploma. All but one LIT in this study offered a much wider range of services to meet individual students' educational and personal goals. The ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program offered its LIT students programming options typical of other LITs. The ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC program offered its LIT students ALC-preparation only.

Recommendation 8. That ALC/LITs be permitted to restrict their LIT services to ALC skills development only if they do not supplement their ALC grants with LIT grants.

Intake

Five ALCs in this study accepted new students twice a year, at the beginning of each academic term. The sixth ALC accepted new students only once a year, at the beginning of fall term. These ALCs experienced high rates of attrition – typically 60% in the ALC that had September-only intake. The eight LITs in this study accepted new students on a continuous-entry basis, which meant that their enrolment levels did not fall when individual students met their learning goals or left for other reasons.

Recommendation 9. That ALCs and ALC/LITs consider instructional methods and course schedules that will accommodate more frequent student intakes per year – e.g., modularized instruction options and more than two academic terms.

Exosystem

The following exosystem factors featured most prominently in this study: staff, instruction, students, student supports, and classroom atmosphere (see Figure 4, p. 23).

Staff

Despite the significant salary differentials, most of the ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT instructors in this study were certified teachers. I believe that certified teachers should make certified teacher wages, but LITs cannot afford to pay professional salary rates.

Recommendation 10. That ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs continue to hire certified teachers, and that provincial funding levels be adjusted to accommodate certified teacher pay scales in these programs.

One ALC, two LITs, and one ALC/LIT offered onsite child care. Adult learners who have young children require child care. Accessing this service onsite facilitates their attendance and eases their concerns about what their children are doing while they are in class.

Recommendation 11. That ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs consider providing onsite child care as part of their delivery services, and apply for increased funding as necessary to accommodate this expense.

Instruction

The six ALCs in this study had course-specific time slots, with group instruction in separate classrooms when the facility had multiple rooms. Seven of the eight LITs had just one classroom, with individualized instruction tailored to students' academic and personal goals. The ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC program scheduled group ALC and LIT instruction the way an ALC would. The ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program had unscheduled and individualized ALC and LIT instruction, the way a LIT would. There are advantages and disadvantages to scheduled/unscheduled and group/individualized instruction. Adult education students at all academic levels are best served by experiencing aspects of both systems.

Recommendation 12. That ALCs consider ways to provide more flexible and individualized instruction, and that LITs consider ways to schedule more group instruction.

Students

Most students' learning goals logically followed from their incoming educational and vocational life experiences. Some students experienced quick progress and increased their goals, but others experienced academic difficulties and ended up lowering their goals or leaving altogether.

Recommendation 13. That ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT teachers pay very close attention to student progress so that learning goals can be adjusted in a timely manner, before the students experience stressful academic frustrations that jeopardize their learning success.

Staff and students reported remarkably positive changes in students' academic and personal demeanors: self-concept, interpersonal relationships, general outlook, etc.

Recommendation 14. That ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT programs stress personal development as well as academic development, and find ways to celebrate both types of success.

The staff members in ALCs (and the ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC program) more frequently attributed their students' learning difficulties to lack of academic preparation and a reluctance to learn. ALC students were more likely to report feeling frustrated and disinterested in school. The staff members in LITs (and the ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program) more frequently attributed these difficulties to learning disabilities that may not have been identified in grade school. LIT students were more likely to report a continued interest in learning while acknowledging that they were "slow" learners.

Recommendation 15. That ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT programs schedule annual teacher training sessions dedicated to identifying and addressing learning disabilities, and that these programs pursue opportunities to refer students to external professional support systems.

Student Supports

Staff and students in programs that provided food identified this service as their programs' best feature. Coffee and snacks not only staved off student hunger, but also created opportunities for students to socialize with classmates and teachers. Some programs also hosted periodic potluck lunches and evening feasts.

Recommendation 16. That ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT programs provide daily refreshments and snacks whenever possible, and that they seek external sponsors as needed to pay for this service.

Transportation support (bus tickets, school bus transportation, periodic taxi reimbursement, rides with staff members, etc.) was more common in LITs than in ALCs and ALC/LITs. However, students in all three types of programs experienced transportation problems that affected their attendance. The difficulties were exacerbated in communities without bus services, especially when the adult education programs were located on the outskirts of their communities.

Recommendation 17. That ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT programs offer transportation options for students who do not have an independent means of travel. The costs need to be factored into their provincial programming grants.

Atmosphere

Staff and students in this study's ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs extolled the virtues of their adult learning environments. In the ALCs, and the ALC/LIT that had started as an ALC program, separating the coffee and classroom areas cultivated a somewhat more businesslike classroom atmosphere. In the LITs, and the ALC/LIT that had started as a LIT program, combining the coffee and classroom areas fostered a decidedly more casual learning climate.

Recommendation 18. That ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs determine the degree of formality/informality that they wish to engender in their classrooms, and then set up their coffee areas with the following correlations in mind: farther from the classroom → a more formal atmosphere; closer to the classroom → a more casual atmosphere.

Macrosystem

The following elements comprised the macrosystem in this research: provincial government funders, local community stakeholders, and students' personal lives (see Figure 5, p. 46).

Provincial Government Funders

ALC directors and LIT coordinators appreciated the interpersonal relationships that they had developed with their provincial funding agents, but they resented the time that was required to submit annual funding applications. ALCs were required to mail paper copies of their renewal applications. In addition to their renewal applications, LITs were required to mail paper copies of numerous semi-annual reports. Several ALC directors and LIT coordinators recommended biannual or triannual renewal applications, but I agree with the Government of Manitoba that annual applications should be required, in order to adjust funding levels in accordance with each program's productivity.

Recommendation 19. That LIT accountability reports be reduced to align with ALC reporting mechanisms, and that all programs have the option of submitting fax or pdf copies instead of mailing in paper copies.

Local Community Stakeholders

The ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs relied on local community supporters for a variety of reasons: student sponsorship, reciprocal student referrals, word-of-mouth validation, funding partnerships, etc. Several directors/coordinators noted the role that monthly inter-agency meetings played in making connections with other educational providers and service agencies in their communities.

Recommendation 20. That ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT directors/coordinators proactively attend the inter-agency meetings in their communities, in order to make and maintain connections with community stakeholders.

Students' Personal Lives

Students' personal lives motivated their decisions to go back to school and to stay there or drop out before completing their academic goals. Low socio-economic status contributed to problems associated with housing, employment, nutrition, and transportation. Physical and mental health issues (often related to addictions) impacted their program participation and general life experiences. All adults have adult issues, but less educated adults are less likely to access the supports needed to resolve these issues.

Recommendation 21. That ALCs, LITs, and ALC/LITs maintain close contact with community service providers so that they can refer students for help as needed.

Students at all levels of programming emphasized the role that family members played in their decisions to go back to school and complete their academic goals. ALC, LIT, and ALC/LIT students described learning barriers created by unsupportive spouses and problematic children (including legal concerns). They also reported positive ripple effects on their friends and relatives. The students' adult lives outside school reciprocally connected with their lives inside school.

Recommendation 22. That adult education programs incorporate students' families and significant others in events associated with their programming.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following recommendations for research respond to the research design limitations as described in chapter 1 (see p. 4).

- The study was based on a limited number of adult education programs. Further research could recruit other adult high schools and literacy programs – in Manitoba and elsewhere.
- This study's programs represented only two adult education delivery models (plus a third "combination" model). Further research could recruit staff and students associated with other types of adult education programs, including Adult 12 programming in regular K-12 schools.
- The research participants consisted of staff and students only. Further research could recruit participants from other stakeholder categories: program administrators above the level of director/coordinator, a wider range of staff classifications, students' significant others (friends, parents, other relatives, etc.), program referral agents, program funding agents (public and private), etc.
- The research design included the collection of data from one-to-one interviews only. Further research could include data derived from directly observing the adult education programs in progress. Other qualitative data sources could include archival records, photographs, staff and student journals, etc.
- The research design depended solely on qualitative inquiry. Further research could add a quantitative survey to supplement the data gathered through interviews.
- The research design included just one researcher. My subjective positioning as a "senior" white female university professor would have affected the interviewer-respondent relationships. Further research could recruit and train interviewers who would be closer to the respondents' ages and life experiences.

- The researcher's cultural and experiential background, age, and gender would also have influenced the interpretations of the research data. Further research could include a broader array of researchers who would review the data independently.

SUMMARY

Part Four closed this research report by making conclusions and recommendations for practice and further research.

APPENDIX INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for Directors and Coordinators

Preliminary Questions

- How long have you been in your position as director (or coordinator) in this program?
- How many more years do you anticipate staying in this position?

- Do you do the learner intake, or do you share this responsibility with someone else?
- Do you teach in addition to your administrative duties?
- Do you have a paid secretary in your program?

- How many hours are you paid per week?
- How many weeks (or months) are you paid per year?
- How many more hours do you need to volunteer each week to get the work done?

- Is your program incorporated or are you attached to another educational institution?
 - a school division? a community college? A Friendship Centre?
- How does this affiliation (or lack thereof) affect your program's salaries?

Questions About Individual Learners Who Volunteered to be Interviewed

- What is this learner's current goal in the program?
- How long has he/she been in the program so far? (in weeks or years)
- What is his/her pattern of attendance? (average hours/days per week)
- How much longer do you anticipate that this learner will need to reach his/her learning goal?

Focus on Student Learning

- What kinds of learner supports are you able to provide? (e.g., transportation, referrals)
- How have you managed to include learners who are difficult to access in the community?

- Why do learners say that they decided to come to your program?
- What do they say keeps them here?
- What kinds of challenges do learners say they have had in the program?

- How do your learners' goals change while they are here?
- What other changes have you seen in learners as they spend more time in the program?

Focus on the Adult Education Program

- Tell me about your learner intake procedures.
- How do you calculate your "learner count" for reporting purposes?

- If you are the director of an ALC, what course options do students have?
 - Do the students work on these courses independently or in groups?
 - How have you adapted these high school courses for use by adults?
- If you are the coordinator of an adult literacy program, do you follow a curriculum or is your program totally individualized?
 - Do the instructors work with students one-on-one or in groups?
 - Are your instructors general practitioners, or subject-area specific?
- Tell me about your interactions with other stakeholders:
 - board members and chair
 - government funding agents
 - program referral agents
 - learners' parents and significant others
 - other adult education programs
 - regular schools in the community
- What other stable sources of funding do you have (if any), besides ALL?
 - How many days a year do you spend on paperwork to secure your funding?
- What kinds of fund-raising activities (if any) do you need to do?
- Do you feel that you have enough funding to maintain your program?
 - If you had more money, what would you do with it?
- What would you say are the strongest features of your program?
- What challenges do you face because of the community that your program is in?
- What part of your job do you enjoy most?
- What kinds of things get in the way of doing your job?
 - How could these challenges be made easier?

Final Question

- Is there anything else you would like to tell me? – anything else that I didn't ask about, or that you would like to add to something we've already discussed?

Interview Questions for Instructors

Preliminary Questions

- How long have you been in your position as instructor in this program?
- How many more years do you anticipate staying in this position?

- How many hours are you paid per week?
- How many weeks (or months) are you paid per year?
- How many more hours do you need to volunteer each week to get the work done?

Focus on Student Learning

- Why do learners say that they decided to come to your program?
- What do they say keeps them here?
- What kinds of challenges do learners say they have had in the program?

- How do your learners' goals change while they are here?
- What other changes have you seen in learners as they spend more time in the program?

Focus on the Adult Education Program

- If you are an ALC instructor, what courses do you teach?
 - Do the students work on these courses independently or in groups?
 - How have you adapted these high school courses for use by adults?
- If you are an adult literacy program instructor, do you follow a curriculum or is your instruction totally individualized?
 - Do you work with students one-on-one or in groups?
 - Are you a general practitioner, or are you subject-area specific?

- What would you say are the strongest features of your program?
- What challenges do you face because of the community that your program is in?

- What part of your job do you enjoy most?
- What kinds of things get in the way of doing your job?
 - How could these challenges be made easier?

Final Question

- Is there anything else you would like to tell me? – anything else that I didn't ask about, or that you would like to add to something we've already discussed?

Interview Questions for Learners

Preliminary Questions

- How much time do you spend in the program? (number of hours/days per week)
- What courses (or subject areas) are you working on now?

Focus on Student Learning

- What made you decide to come to this adult education program?
- How have your learning goals changed since you first came here?

- What kinds of opportunities have you had here, that you wouldn't have had anywhere else?
- What kinds of learning activities do you enjoy most?

- What kinds of things get in the way of your learning?
 - How could these challenges be made easier?

- Where do you plan to go from here?
 - Do you have plans to take more education?
 - Do you have plans to do a particular kind of job?
- What can the adult education program do to help you reach these goals?

Focus on the Adult Education Program

- If you could change anything in the program, what would it be?
 - How would you change it?
- If you could keep anything exactly the same in the program, what would it be?
 - Why do you want it to stay the same?

Final Question

- Is there anything else you would like to tell me? – anything else that I didn't ask about, or that you would like to add to something we've already discussed?