

2010

OnSIS Think Tank Report



**Ontario Association of
Adult and Continuing Education
School Board Administrators**

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Section 1: Introduction

Outline of the Project:

CESBA was contracted to design and implement an OnSIS consultation activity that would provide important information to build capacity in the collection of OnSIS data for the purposes of informing the Ministry, school boards and schools.

The designed consultative process was to involve participants from a number of school boards (French and English) in order to provide input on the development of a short-term plan for enhancing board capacity to collect and use OnSIS adult and continuing education data.

This short-term plan was to focus on the following:

- a) The current capacity for collecting and reporting OnSIS adult and continuing education data
- b) Possible enhancements in streamlining the collection of 2009-10 OnSIS data
- c) Identification of strategies for using continuing education data to support policy and program improvement
- d) Identification of ways of using adult and continuing education data to support school board research into effective learner pathways

Questions to be considered in the consultative process included:

- a) How is OnSIS adult and continuing education data used within your board's current environment?
 - o Adult and continuing education school/program level
 - o Board level
- b) What opportunities are there to improve the way OnSIS adult and continuing education data fits within your board's environment?
 - o Actual collection and reporting of data
 - o How the data is used to support analysis of student achievement
- c) What other data do you need/use in combination with OnSIS data to tell the story of how adult and continuing education enables the following groups of students to graduate or enter postsecondary education and training?
 - o Regular day school students
 - o Early school leavers
 - o Adults 21 and over
- d) What student success stories do you want to be able to tell in three years time?

The results of the Think Tank sessions were to be reviewed with Ministry staff and a report produced that:

- a) Documented effective practices among school boards that currently collect continuing education credit data through a central Student Management System using the Ontario Education Number to track student-level data
- b) Identified strategies for improving OnSIS data collection starting with baseline data in 2008-09 and moving forward in 2009-10 and 2010-11
- c) Identified options for developing a three year plan for using adult and continuing education data to support policy and program improvement at the school, board and provincial levels
- d) Identified ways of using adult and continuing education data to support school board research into effective learner pathways

The slide deck prepared for the teleconference identified the following key goals and objectives:

- Improve the quality of adult and continuing education data collected and reported through school boards' central student management systems and OnSIS
- Enhance communication between board program and administrative staff and site administrators responsible for collecting and using adult and continuing education data for evidence-based improvement planning
- Support research into how adult and continuing education credit programs enable students to graduate and/or enter postsecondary programs

The following discussion questions were included in the initial teleconference:

- How can we identify and promote improved methods of collecting and using data in a way that is reasonable and fits with the unique delivery models of adult and continuing education programs?
- How can we incorporate adult and continuing education programs within school board improvement planning using data? For example:
 - Number of students who access continuing education programs
 - Number of credits earned through PLAR
 - Number of diplomas awarded through adult continuing education programs
 - Number of early leavers accessing adult and continuing education programs in order to graduate and/or enter postsecondary programs
- How can adult and continuing education data be used to support research into adult and continuing education learner pathways?

The Environmental Context:

The collection and use of data for informed decision making and the measurement of achievement is the expectation today in the world of business and government. Governments everywhere are under pressure to demonstrate that they are spending public funds wisely and are obtaining specific results as a consequence of the money they are spending. The ability to demonstrate successful results in education has been a keystone of the current provincial government. While the goals they have set have focused on elementary and secondary education, it is understood that Adult and Continuing Education must ensure the same level of accountability that exists in educational governance everywhere.

This change extends beyond financial accountability to ensuring that the needs of learners are met, and that the public recognizes and values this activity. *Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education* (2008) states "Education and training for adults are critical for the economic prosperity and social well-being of individuals and communities in Ontario. To stand still is to move backwards in global terms. We must build awareness of the good news in education, so that Ontarians are justifiably proud of the quality of our system and our internationally competitive standing."

CESBA recognizes the importance of this work, and of the significance of this opportunity to work together with the Ministry of Education in setting the framework for the collection and use of data on Adult and Continuing Education in the province of Ontario.

Section 2: The Implementation of the OnSIS Consultation Activity

1. The invitation to school boards to participate in this process was based on a sampling of Public, Catholic, French and English-language boards in rural, remote and urban settings that use one of the major student management systems for reporting adult and continuing education data to OnSIS.
2. An initial teleconference call was held in early November in order to prepare for the Think Tank sessions. During the one-hour teleconference call, participants were provided with a brief overview of the purpose, goals and objectives for the sessions and a brief update on strategies to improve the quality of OnSIS adult and continuing education data.
3. Three Think Tanks were held as follows:
 - Locations and dates:
 - Richmond Hill – November 23, 2009
 - Ottawa – February 25, 2010
 - Hamilton – March 3, 2010
 - Student Management Systems (at the Board Level) represented at the Think Tanks included Trillium, Maplewood, ESIS and Trevlac.
 - Positions attending included Superintendents, MISA Leads, Principals, Vice-Principals, Administrators, Board SMS administrators, Site SMS administrators, and EDU staff.
 - Representatives from the following school boards were in attendance:
 - a) Richmond Hill:
 1. York Region DSB
 2. Toronto DSB
 - b) Ottawa - designed to validate and expand the information produced in the November meeting
 1. CEPEO
 2. CSC des Grandes Rivieres
 3. CSC du Nouvel Ontario
 4. Ottawa Carlton DSB
 5. Ottawa Carlton CDSB
 6. Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB
 7. Lakehead DSB
 8. Upper Canada DSB
 - c) Hamilton - designed to validate and expand the information produced in the November meeting
 1. Algonquin and Lakeshore CDSB
 2. Dufferin Peel CDSB
 3. Greater Essex County DSB
 4. Halton DSB
 5. Hamilton Wentworth DSB
 6. Hamilton Wentworth CDSB
 7. Peel DSB
 8. Thames Valley DSB
 9. Waterloo Catholic DSB

4. An initial follow-up teleconference was held with school board superintendents, and a second follow-up teleconference was held. All school board Think Tank attendees were invited to participate.

Section 3: Report on Think Tank Activity

A. Documented effective practices among school boards that currently collect continuing education credit data through a central Student Management System using the Ontario Education Number to track student-level data:

1. **Use a student management system.**
 - Run a report that shows the OENs and related data in the student management system that does not correlate with the OEN database; this allows the board to correct the data as the year progresses as opposed to doing it all at year end
 - Use the student management system to generate reports that identify discrepancies/errors so these can be addressed before the reporting period
2. **Work with a vendor(s) that will support the unique needs of adult and continuing education data collection requirements.**
 - Tailoring their systems to meet adult and continuing education needs as well as OnSIS needs
 - Improvement in processes required to increase the ability of adult and continuing education programs to meet the reporting requirements
3. **Match or align the adult and continuing education student management system with the board student management system.**
 - Ensure that when two systems are used they can “talk to each other”
4. **Have trained and knowledgeable staff.**
 - Expertise in:
 - Student management systems
 - OnSIS reporting requirements
 - OEN
 - Ministry guidelines
 - Other relevant information (i.e. Continuing Education Registers)
 - Staff know who to contact (i.e. Board IT or OnSIS staff) to work around challenges that are encountered
 - Administrative staff who are familiar and comfortable with:
 - OnSIS reporting requirements
 - Use of data for informed decision making
 - School improvement planning processes
5. **Use developed forms and processes to generate reports.**
 - Standardized registration form

6. Access to pre-defined report templates is helpful.

- Reports are available in student management systems designed to collect specific data

Items that Negatively Impact Effective Practices:

Think Tank attendees identified a number of challenges in the area of best practices. These include:

- Concern about not being able to articulate any best practices
- Operational Issues, reorganization, workload take precedence over best practices
- Continuing education administrators are not always the ones who can articulate best practices as OnSIS activity is outside of their normal activity
 - “We at Con. Ed. do not handle that but IT at the Board does”
- Lack of understanding and knowledge at the board level about best systems to use to track continuing education programs effectively

B. Identified strategies for improving OnSIS data collection starting with baseline data in 2008-09 and moving forward in 2009-10 and 2010-11:

1. Create an action plan designed to continue to enhance the ability of boards to submit quality data to OnSIS.

- Develop provincial Adult and Continuing Education OnSIS definitions
- Develop a process for managing board requests for OnSIS enhancements
- Develop a communication protocol for OnSIS releases that includes adult and continuing education administrators
- Develop clear, consistent and transparent provincial business rules for the following uses:
 - school level (i.e. Information collected on registration)
 - board level (i.e.: How does night school from one board get reported in another?)
 - covering data collection, storage and reporting
 - cross board data
 - destination or exit data
- Continue to hold “consultation” or “Think Tank” activities with school boards who have not been involved to date as the activity is highly valued and has a positive impact
 - One continuing education administrator noted that after attendance at the Think Tank the board was looking at purchasing an electronic student management system

2. Identify common shared language to enhance collaboration between site-level and program staff and board-level superintendents, research and support staff. Create a terminology reference for use by all involved.

3. Provide the staff, resources and lead time required to enter and maintain accurate data, especially when changing or adding to current data submission requirements.

- “Difficult to purchase these licenses...and be viable when it is a small board”
- Lead time required to report additional information and to accommodate change

4. **Establish a process for determining the validity of the data at the school, board and ministry level to determine the extent to which 2008 - 2009 can be used as baseline data.**
 - Review of current data collected to identify source of errors or omissions
 - Reports have to be analyzed to pinpoint the reasons why PLAR for Mature Student OnSIS data does not align with EFIS data
 - Transparent collection procedures that ensure valid data
 - Ministry, boards and schools understand each others processes
 - Discrepancies found between Ministry, board and school reports are understood
 - Changes to collection procedures are processed appropriately
 - Clarify to what extent 2008-2009 data can be used as baseline data
5. **Review data collection processes and samples of 2008 - 2009 data at the school, board and ministry level to identify data and data collection mechanisms that might be useful baseline data.**
 - Identify reports that boards are currently using
 - Compare similarities and differences between the 2008-09 and 2009-10 Continuing Education data. For example:
 - Are learner characteristics different, or similar?
 - Are the numbers reported through OnSIS the full picture, or are we missing students who withdraw part way through the semester?
6. **Allow for all previous names to be checked when applying for OEN.**
 - The multiple names of some adults entering adult and continuing education programs make the OEN application process challenging; allowing for all previous names to be checked would ensure multiple OENs were not being assigned to the same student
7. **Establish a small ad hoc committee consisting of CESBA members, board IT representatives, and Ministry Adult and Continuing Education and ESAB staff to review progress and challenges with the collection and use of OnSIS data.**
 - Review and recommend action on all activity related to the collection and use of adult and continuing education data
 - Development of business rules for use in adult and continuing education to ensure consistent and reliable data is reported
 - Continued review and improvement of consistent business rules
 - Issues or concerns related to OnSIS submissions
 - Practices related to business rules: (i.e. for granting the OSSD (OSS/OS:IS) and the SSGD at the school level but that meet the ministries requirement for consistent information; or the full disclosure policy for senior-level credit courses and how it relates to “non-completion” in OnSIS)
 - Review of proposed timelines

Items that Limit the Ability to Improve OnSIS Data Collection

Think Tank attendees identified a number of items that still need to be addressed in order to improve OnSIS data collection. These include:

- Boards still doing manual collection of data

- Concern that reporting data once a year manually could result in missing important data
- Problems with determining mandatory fields
- Problems with assigning OENs
- Trillium data does not always match the data that is in the OEN database
- Concern about the November to February student who is not reported
- The amount of time being invested in this process by secretaries and administrators
- Issues with continuous intake
- PLAR is not captured in Trillium (only PLAR challenge is a course type)
- OnSIS needs to be updated/revised to align with the different type of delivery of education in the 21st century: different types of student schedules, timelines, and formats
- Data integrity is an issue. Some identified problems include:
 - School level data is not consistent with board level data
 - Board level data is not consistent with Ministry level data
 - Schools may not be appropriately identified which may skew results (i.e. a regular day school that should be identified as an adult day school)
 - School boards are not collecting data consistently
 - School boards are not storing data consistently
 - School boards are not reporting data consistently
 - Uncertainty about cross-board information

C. Identified options for developing a three year plan for using adult and continuing education data to support policy and program improvement at the school, board and provincial levels:

1. Articulate clearly the prioritized goals of the ministry in relationship to the collection of adult and continuing education data.

Think Tank attendees raised questions about the Ministry definition of success for adult and continuing education programs when success is not identified and the scope of identifying success is so large. Discussion occurred on possible indicators and performance measures. Attendees were asked about how the data might be used to enhance accountability and support research.

The task of identifying specific outputs, outcomes, indicators or performance measures is complex and not easily identified in a Think Tank session. The priorities and specific goals and objectives set out by the Ministry influence the options that are most appropriately taken in planning how adult and continuing education data is used to support policy and program improvement at the school, board and provincial levels.

Think Tank attendees identified a number of items that might be used to determine success. It is likely that there would be a different three year plan suggested in using data to support policy and program improvement for each of the examples provided below. Clarification of priorities and specific goals and objectives would streamline the process.

Examples of items used to determine success included the following:

- the number of people who successfully complete courses that they have started

- the number of diplomas granted
- the number of students enrolled
- student credit accumulation
- student goal attainment
- college or university entry
- attainment of a job or a promotion
- meeting student needs

2. Complete a detailed review and analysis of reported data (OnSIS) and collected data (school level) to clarify for involved parties the data that is available at the school, board and ministry level and identify possible additional items to be collected.

MISA leads and Adult and Continuing Education administrators have numerous questions about the collection and use of Adult and Continuing Education OnSIS data. Some of the questions asked include:

- What information is the Ministry currently pulling from OnSIS in regards to Adult and Continuing Education?
- Can the Ministry tell the number of students being serviced by Adult and Continuing Education programs that originally started in other boards?
- Can the Ministry report on student mobility?

The review and analysis should include:

- Review of Collected Data
 - What is collected?
 - What is used in schools?
 - What is reported to OnSIS?
- Review of data not being collected
 - What is not collected?
- What is the impact of not reporting specific data?
 - Is it important to know the length of time a student takes to complete a correspondence course?
 - Is it important to know that the student is in and out of a course multiple times in a year?

3. Investigate the possibility of having boards report additional data to the Ministry and outline draft timelines for which this and other OnSIS activity could occur.

- The use of enrolment data and achievement data provides valuable information that will support program improvement
- Boards are currently collecting enrolment data for students who start in credit courses and are then storing the data
- Boards effectively using a student management system will find the move to reporting enrolment data to OnSIS manageable
- Boards reporting data manually to OnSIS will find that this demand increases their challenges
- Business rules will need to be established

4. Develop strategies to enhance the ability of boards to use the data that is being collected in adult and continuing education programs and submitted to OnSIS.

- Increase understanding and provide support to all board on how the board data warehouse can be used.

- Currently boards are using data warehouses to predict trends and to forecast activity. Can this information be used to suggest courses that should be offered in summer school or night school? Using the information stored within the data warehouse to forecast course offerings at summer school or night school, instead of using past history may be a more effective strategy
- Clarification of when schools move the adult and continuing education school data to the data warehouse is required – getting it in by the end of June would be tough – is the end of August problematic

5. Complete research designed to increase understanding of the profile of the Ontario adult and continuing education student.

This was identified as a priority at all three Think Tanks. Generally the following needs were identified:

- Ministry needs to know the target audience and why these learners need additional support to reach their goals
- Ministry needs to understand the learner profile before attempting to understand the organizational response that is differentiated at the provincial level
- Boards need to understand the learner profile before attempting to understand the organizational response that is required at the board level
- Adult and Continuing Education administrators need to understand how the learner profile allows for an appropriate school, program or classroom response
- The value of doing a snapshot survey similar to the project CESBA did for MCI was expressed

The profile of the learner being served in Adult and Continuing Education programs should include the following specific information:

- Age groups:
 - Consider under 18, 18-21, and over 21
 - Are there different age groups/ranges that are more appropriate to capture specific, relevant demographic criteria
 - Immigrant (under 5 years) information: D.O.B.; country of origin; date of entry
- Work force and returning students: education, essential skills
- Late bloomers – high school leavers to age of 21 (need credits)
- OEN/Non-OEN students
- planning process of the adult student
- goals – challenges
- pathways for specific student profiles
 - Night School
 - Summer School
 - Adult Day Schools
 - Self Study
 - E-learning
- Information about those not being served
 - Need for tutoring, special supports, accommodations

This work would allow for the following to occur:

- Analysis of the profile of the credit student with the ESL and LBS learners
- Identification of:
 - commonalities in the profile of students who have successfully completed credits as an adult

- numbers of second language learners
- numbers of students who entered from an LBS or ESL classroom
- information of relevance beyond what is currently collected in OnSIS
- Inform decisions on meaningful organizational responses
- Increase information on the need and delivery of guidance services for adults

6. Investigate learner pathways of adult learners and regular day school students.

- Identification of the learners who access different program pathways that include credit courses delivered through continuing education programs (e.g., night school, summer school, correspondence/self-study, independent study, e- learning, dual credits, etc.)
- Where are the different types of learners experiencing success/challenges in the steps along the pathway?
- Can patterns of achievement be identified?
- Are there supports that can be provided that make a difference?
- Development of learner pathways that include educational needs, educational objectives, and other services required
- Identify all the steps in the process of moving from grade 9 to high school graduate and/or postsecondary education and training: awareness of the adult and continuing education programs, enrolment and registration, credits attempted and completed, diplomas granted

7. Develop a resource that presents concrete examples of the many pathways adult credit students follow to reach specific personal, educational, apprenticeship, and employment goals.

This would be a valuable resource by:

- Providing a reference for adult learners, school board staff and other referring agencies that provides transition information for adult learners entering or exiting a secondary school credit program
- Detailing the role of the PLAR for Mature Students process in an adult's pathway
- Providing information on the transition from Literacy and English language training programs to credit programs for improved educational planning
- Information about the role of non-credit programs in providing support to students prior to entry into a credit program or while in a credit program
- Providing Information on where to access current and complete information about adult upgrading opportunities
- Outlining steps required to meet academic/career preparation goals
- Providing information on how to access college and university programs

8. Design and provide provincial professional development training specific to the school improvement planning process in the adult and continuing education setting.

This would include:

- A module designed to increase the knowledge of adult and continuing education administrators on the collection and use of data
- Examples of how data from student management systems is used for program decision making
- Examples of reports that can be generated
- Developing school improvement plans in the adult and continuing education environment

- Practical exercises designed to increase ability to understand, analyse and interpret data
- Introduction to Action Research in adult and continuing education
- Provide a model for a small action research project that administrators can implement on return to their school
- How to use information from student information systems for decision making purposes
- An initial resource on school improvement planning that is applicable to the Adult and Continuing Education environment
- Presentation at CESBA

9. **Create a set of fact sheets that outline responsibilities related to the collection and use of data in adult and continuing education that recognizes the differences between the collection and use of data in adult and continuing education, and regular day school programs.**

Recognizing that there are multiple users of student-level data at the school, board and ministry level, a fact sheet would be developed for each of the following groups:

- Continuing education school principals, vice-principals or administrators
- Continuing education site data administrator or clerical staff
- School board directors and superintendents
- School board researchers
- School board data administrator and OnSIS staff

See http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2005801.asp for an example.

10. **Review and analyze the process for collecting exit data to determine its effectiveness in identifying the destinations and pathways of the adult credit student.**

The importance of using exit data to increase the understanding of the learner profile and pathways was clearly articulated in the first Think Tank. While this information is tracked it was stressed by Think Tank participants that the information currently collected should not be used because of concerns about its validity.

Suggested activities included:

- Explore the option of using the OEN to track college/university entrance and success
- Explore how different types of students graduate or transition to postsecondary destinations (e.g., college, university or the workplace)?

11. **Review and evaluate information from other jurisdictions to identify possible indicators or systems for performance measures.**

Examples include:

- BC cohort research model
- Recent research on early school leavers from Alberta

12. **Provide supports for the Intended Results from the Think Tank by identifying the human, financial, organizational or system resources needed to support the activities.**

- Describe the specific actions, processes and tools needed to produce the intended result
- Identify who will be affected by the specific actions (e.g., the type of learner and number of learners)

- Describe immediate changes in terms of awareness, knowledge, skill or behaviour at the school/site, board levels
- Analyze and describe intermediate-term changes at the site/school and board levels as a result of the new awareness, knowledge, skill or behaviour
- Describe the longer-term changes in terms of impact on student outcomes as a result of the desired impact attributed to the intermediate changes in awareness, skill or behaviour at the site/school and board levels

13. Develop forms and reports to be used as provincial examples to assist boards in collecting, using and reporting data.

- Develop sample standardized registration forms for boards to use
 - request previous names to improve OEN process
- Create reports from the data warehouse for use at the school and board level for improvement purposes (Business Intelligence Solutions)

14. Encourage research that will use continuing education data to support policy and program improvement at the school, board and provincial levels.

- Create a CESBA/Ministry presentation and present to MISA Leads on the research needs related to the topic of the role of continuing education in assisting boards in meeting student success goals. Learning to 18 and learning beyond 18 should be considered. Some suggested topics suggested for research might include the impact of continuing education programs on:
 - credit accumulation
 - graduation rates
 - This would involve developing pre-defined credit activity reports from the student management system that include the various BSID numbers for credits earned in a regular day school, alternative school, night school, summer school or adult continuing education day school).
- Create a CESBA/Ministry presentation and present to Professional Network Centres on research needs related to adult and continuing education. Encourage PNC funding of \$4,000 to \$5,000 to support activities

D. Identified ways of using adult and continuing education data to support school board research into effective learner pathways

Suggested Activities:

1. Collect and evaluate the data that demonstrates how continuing education programs can provide flexible pathways for secondary students.

The following examples include ways in which the collection and analysis of adult and continuing education data may be useful in determining effective learner pathways:

- Students with fewer than 22 credits who can't get 30 credits in their final year any other way than through continuing education (e.g., night school or summer school)
- Quadmester intake with a combination of credit recovery and co-op credits linked to part-time work to improve the persistence of those students with large credit deficits
- Students in acceleration programs who want to graduate in four years using night school and summer school credits to make the fourth year lighter, take extra credits, or accommodate schedule conflicts

- Grade 10 students who include continuing education as part of their four or five-year graduation plan
- Grade 8 students using summer school credit courses to reach ahead
- Regular day school students planning to take e-learning courses through night school in order to accelerate and/or take more optional credits
- Coop/High Skills Major students who can only do their work placement outside of the regular day school schedule

2. Collect and evaluate the data that demonstrates how continuing education programs support pathways for adult students.

- The total number of students who access adult and continuing education credit programs
- Demographic profile of the learners who access adult and continuing education programs (e.g., under 18, 18 to 21 and 21 and over)
- Enrolment patterns by school types (e.g., night school, summer school, adult day school, adult continuing education day school)
- Provide a two-year planning window to give time for research staff to analyze 2008-09 data and develop learner profile reports for different program pathways that include credit courses delivered through continuing education programs (e.g., night school, summer school, correspondence/self-study, independent study, e-learning, dual credits, etc.)
- The diversity of students who access adult and continuing education programs to graduate and/or transition to postsecondary education or training
- A qualitative study of policies and procedures, admission practices, placement testing, student success strategies including preparatory courses and the range of courses and other types of support offered at the site/school
- A quantitative study analyzing the enrolment patterns, credits attempted and credits earned, diplomas granted, etc. for learners registered in adult and continuing education programs
- Conduct a quantitative and qualitative study of the 2008-09 and 2009-10 Continuing Education system data in order to determine:
 - Who returns to Continuing Education over successive years
 - Who applies and gets into community college directly from Continuing Education credit programs
 - Who applies and gets into community college as adult students
 - Who entered the Continuing Education system after leaving the regular day school system
 - Detailed information on the demographics and geographic patterns of adult students in school boards across the province

3. Adapt the format of school board improvement plans to include information on adult and continuing education programs that support student success.

- The school board improvement plan is a key component in the direction of school board research activity; currently it is based on the regular day school model of elementary and secondary education and does not reflect the uniqueness of adult and continuing education programs and the role adult and continuing education programs can play in supporting both student success and the adult learners within the board community.

4. **Conduct research to identify the factors that have enabled adult learners 21 and over to successfully return to school to complete a high school diploma.**
 - Learners who had not completed 16 by 16 would be encouraged to participate in the research (King's cohort studies); school boards could use this information to support regular day school students with similar characteristics that puts them at risk of becoming an early school leaver
 - The number and type of credits regular day school students and early school leavers under 21 have prior to entering continuing education programs; this would enable site-level staff to become more pro-active in terms of the types of credits offered and the mode of delivery

5. **Evaluate the role of Alternative Education Programs in discussions related to OnSIS and effective learner pathways.**
 - Alternative Program serve as a legitimate pathway for learners
 - Collect and review patterns of credit achievement for students in alternative education programs
 - Create and review the learner profiles (e.g. alternative education student, early school leavers, and the adult learner)
 - Alternative Education administrators continue to report challenges with reporting alternative program data thru OnSIS
 - There is a need to identify if there are any common criteria used by boards running alternative education programs; this would enable research staff in boards to begin to describe some of the characteristics and previous learning pathways of these learners using the OEN

6. **Host a "Special Interest Group" of CESBA and AERO members.**

The group will:

 - Ascertain just where boards are in research capacity specific to adult and continuing education
 - Determine opportunities for research
 - Discuss ways in which boards can improve their capacity for using research
 - Discuss and develop templates for research within school boards and the Ministry to collect data of significance

Section 4: Conclusion

The Think Tanks were a very valuable exercise providing a wealth of information that will be useful in identifying steps that will assist in moving forward with OnSIS. It is suggested that after a careful review of the material included in this document that consideration be given to the development of a strategic plan for implementation of the process used for the collection, analysis, and reporting of data for use in improvement planning. Alternately, priorities and milestones could be set out for the implementation process.

Items to Consider:

1. Setting Priorities:

Further information is required on identifying the prioritized goals of the Ministry in relationship to the collection of adult and continuing education data. A variety of Ministry documents call for action in using adult and continuing education data. There should be direction on how and when each of these distinct items is addressed:

- *Ontario Learns* (2005): “to document the story in numbers of what is actually happening in individual communities and in specific program areas across Ontario”
- *Adult Education Review* (2004): “improve the results and outcomes for adult learners in Ontario”
- *Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education* (2008): “will continue to deliver appropriate and strategic funding so that our schools have the resources they need.....and, continue using data and results to assess our work, monitor progress, and address situations where additional guidance may be necessary.”

Specific questions can be formed from these statements:

- What story in numbers does the Ministry want to tell? How quickly do they want to tell the story? Is it the story in numbers that is important or the improvement in numbers? What is the time line for improvement in numbers?
- What action is required to improve instruction, policies, programs, and student achievement?
- How does funding and accountability relate to the collection of adult and continuing education data?

Recommendation:

Articulate the goals of the Ministry in order of priority and action as they relate to the development and delivery of adult and continuing education.

2. Resources and Timelines:

Requests for resources supporting the implementation of OnSIS continue to be made. Ideally there are resources distributed based on prioritized goals. The resources the Ministry can or cannot provide to support school boards in the collection, analysis and reporting for use of OnSIS data affect the timelines for the implementation of a strategic plan.

Without additional resources school boards will continue to be challenged and progress will be slow. Smaller boards and programs do not have the funding required for the initial student management system and the enhancements that are and will be required. Moving ahead with enhancements or the collection of additional information (e.g., continuing education enrolment data) required for the development of effective indicators or

performance measures are troublesome when boards do not have access to effective student management systems.

With the provision of additional resources and support it is possible to implement shorter timelines for the activity.

Recommendations:

Develop a timeline as part of the strategic plan.

Provide school boards with an incentive or financial support so that they are able to effectively and efficiently meet their requirements in reporting data to OnSIS.

Address the need for an improved cost-effective provincial process for working with vendors.

3. Actions Required:

Prioritized goals will help to determine what action is required. Given the complexity of adult and continuing education, a number of action items have been suggested in this document. A process should be developed to determine the actions included in the strategic plan. In reviewing these items it is recommended that the following questions be considered:

- Where is it on our list of prioritized goals?
- What is the cost (financial and human) of collecting this data?
- Is this data that can be effectively and efficiently collected?
- How valuable is this information?
- Is it reliable and valid data?
- Is this information going to increase the effectiveness of programs?
- Is this information going to increase the efficiency of programs?
- Does it enhance the ability of boards to submit quality data to OnSIS?
- Other questions to be determined.

Tracking exit data is an example of one item of interest that has been identified. When the above items are considered, the following information appears:

- The human cost of tracking this data is high as many adults exiting from credit programs are not going on to college and university, so follow up would be done by telephone calls. Mobility of some adult students affects the ease in which they can be contacted. Information from LBS programs (with many fewer students) provides a basis for this information.
- Consideration of the implications of increasing workload.
- While new exit codes can be put into student management systems, to what extent is the information reliable and valuable?
- While this certainly is an area of interest when looking at pathways, how high should this be on the list of prioritized goals? Schedule accordingly.
- Exit data for students applying to OCAS or OUAC might be considered, as it should be reliable, valid, effective and efficiently collected.

Recommendations:

Careful analysis of all suggested activity should occur.

Develop a model to review all suggested activity.

4. Communication:

A communication plan is required for effective implementation of a strategic plan. The complexity of the collection, analysis and reporting on the use of OnSIS data requires that numerous individuals in a number of different positions at the board and ministry level are involved with this activity. It is particularly important that individuals understand the language and activity of all individuals involved. It is quite common for principals to insist that their IT person is involved in any OnSIS activity as they are uncomfortable speaking about OnSIS. An effective communication plan helps to ensure that lack of communication between parties does not negatively impact progress. Good communication allows for the exchange of ideas, the ability to gain consensus and the opportunity to question and confirm the accuracy of completed work.

The OnSIS help line is an effective way to communicate problems, but it is not the only solution. A number of the items contained in the report support good communication.

Recommendation:

Establish a communication protocol with mechanisms developed and put in place to ensure effective communication about OnSIS implementation and the use of the data occurs.

5. Research Activities:

Many opportunities for research related to the collection, analysis and reporting of data exist. Discussion on research to demonstrate how adult and continuing education programs can provide flexible pathways for secondary school students and support student success goals is exciting. Much of the information contained under “Identified ways of using adult and continuing education data to support school board research into effective learner pathways” is reflective of the interest in this area.

It is important that research related to adult students is seen to be as equally important and exciting. In order to “improve the results and outcomes for adult learners in Ontario”, *Ontario Learns* (2005), it is important to understand:

- who the adult learner is
- pathways that exist for the adult learner
- the needs of the adult learner
- the barriers that exist
- the resources or lack of resources that exist for adult learners

School board adult and continuing education program administrators should see value in the research activities that occur. It is important also to balance the need for research with the need to support adult and continuing education programs with the collection, analysis and reporting on use of data. Again, research activities should be aligned with prioritized goals.

Recommendation:

Engage in research activities that will “improve the results and outcomes for adult learners in Ontario” and will be based on the prioritized goals of the Ministry in relationship to the collection of adult and continuing education data.

6. Professional Support and Development

The value of provincial discussions on OnSIS has been well established. It becomes evident that adult and continuing education administrators find it challenging to speak about specific use of data or enhancements to OnSIS.

Given the experience of implementation of OnSIS in the secondary school, it is suggested that a similar approach be taken here. In supported environments with colleagues in the same positions, secondary school principals required continued support and training in using OnSIS data for school improvement training. It cannot be assumed that adult and continuing education administrators have the skills to analyze collected data for school improvement planning purposes without these same supports. School improvement planning with cohorts of students differs greatly from school improvement planning in the adult and continuing education world.

Support in the effective use of adult and continuing education student management systems should also be considered.

Recommendations:

Deliver a series of professional development activities designed to support adult and continuing education school board administrators that meet the prioritized goals of the Ministry in relationship to the collection, analysis and reporting of data for use in school improvement planning.

Develop a handbook designed to support adult and continuing education administrators working with OnSIS and school improvement planning.

7. Enhancements for the Collection of 2009-10 OnSIS Data and Beyond

Generally this appears to be a challenging question for many adult and continuing education school board administrators. No clear enhancements were suggested. Continuous intake continues to be a concern. The recent memo on PLAR for Mature Student reporting through OnSIS makes that a priority to be addressed.

It is suggested that an analysis of student cross registration is completed and shared to ensure there is full understanding of what is currently occurring.

The reporting of enrolment data appears to be the critical piece of data that is missing. Without this information there is no full picture of what is occurring within adult and continuing education programs. The availability of this data will allow for the identification of meaningful indicators, and provide data that can be used effectively for school improvement planning. Discussion should occur on the development of a strategy to report enrolment data. This may not be as challenging a step as expected.

Recommendation:

Many of the recommendations in this report need to be in place in order to discuss enhancements. Some of these include:

- A careful analysis of all suggested activity should occur.
- A model to review all suggested activity should be developed.
- A communication protocol is established with mechanisms developed and in place to ensure effective communication about OnSIS implementation and the use of the data occurs.

In conclusion, the importance and value of developing a strategic plan for implementation of the process used for the collection, analysis, and reporting of data through OnSIS as well as the use of this data to support improvement planning must be stressed.

CESBA has played a key role in assisting school boards with the implementation of OnSIS in adult and continuing education. CESBA looks forward to continuing to assist in the implementation of OnSIS activity, but more importantly to assist adult and continuing education administrators in the analysis and use of collected data for the purposes of improving adult and continuing education in Ontario.

Reach Every Student – Energizing Ontario Education (2008) states: “Education and training for adults are critical for the economic prosperity and social well-being of individuals and communities in Ontario.” The use of data to tell the story of the excellent programs offered to adults in Ontario is exciting as is the opportunity to use the data for improvement planning and innovation. CESBA, as a key stakeholder, recognizes that this continued work that can positively influence “the prosperity and social well-being of individuals and communities in Ontario”. (Reach Every Student – Energizing Ontario Education)