

Essential Skills and Your Business

Fanshawe College Simcoe Campus

**EMPLOYMENT
ONTARIO**

Employment Ontario programs are funded
in part by the Government of Canada



Association of
Canadian
Community
Colleges (ACCC)

Association des
collèges
communautaires
Canada (ACCC)



**FANSHAWE
COLLEGE**



James N. Allan Campus

Objectives for Today

- To understand essential skills – what they are and how your business can use them when hiring and when succession planning.
- To understand the importance of having your employees realize the value of essential skills when looking at their own employment and advancement plan.

So...what are Essential Skills?

- “**enabling**” skills that help people perform tasks required by their jobs
- Skills that provide workers with a **foundation** for learning other skills
- Skills that enhance the **ability to adapt** to change

The 9 Essential Skills Include:

- 1. **Document Use** – refers to tasks that involve a variety of information displays including graphs, lists, tables, blueprints and schematics.
- 2. **Reading Text** – refers to reading material that is in the form of sentences or paragraphs such as regulations, letters, memos, and reports.

Essential Skills Continued...

- 3. **Writing** – pertains to tasks involving the completion of documents such as forms and writing text.
- 4. **Numeracy** – refers to the workers' use of numbers and includes skills involving money, scheduling or budgeting, accounting, measuring and calculation, and estimation.

Essential Skills Continued...

- 5. **Oral Communication** – involves the workers' use of speech to give and exchange thoughts and information.
- 6. **Thinking Skills** – refers to the workers' ability to problem solve, make decisions, think critically, plan and organize job tasks, use their memory and find information.

Essential Skills Continued...

- 7. **Working with Others** – pertains to the skills that workers need to work successfully with others to carry out their tasks.
- 8. **Computer Use** – refers to the workers' use of computers and related equipment to perform their jobs.
- 9. **Continuous Learning** – pertains to the workers' requirement to participate in an ongoing process of acquiring skills and knowledge.

Heavy Investments are made in the area of Essential Skills because of:

- Canada's documented skill deficit
- Their impact of Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
 - Their impact on safety
 - Their impact on employment
 - Their impact on earnings
- The need for a valid measure of workplace competency

Employer's Challenge when Hiring

Hiring and Retention:

Many employers use academic credentials, such as the OSSD, to screen job applicants. This practice is risky because:

- There is no national standard for Grade 12
- Educational content varies regionally
- The academic nature of the content is different from what is found in the workplace

English Test Question Comparison

English Grade 12 Exam
Question:

In the phrase “a sorrow wandering in the halls of memory” (line 5), the author effectively uses:

- a) Imitative harmony
- b) Personification
- c) Alliteration
- d) Irony

Essential Skills Exam
Question:

Purchasing clerks look in catalogues for information about tools and supplies.

Look at the page about drills.

What drill would you use for stainless steel?

APPLICATIONS – USING ESSENTIAL SKILLS WITHIN SMALL & MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES

Challenge

- Many small business do not have human resource staff and their employees wear many “hats”.
- Little time is allocated for training.
- Financial resources are constrained.
- Difficulties with productivity and safety performance.

A quote from www.monster.ca...

“Both employers and applicants have learned that pre-employment screening is an absolute necessity in today’s business world. More importantly, they’ve learned due diligence in hiring is a way to keep firms safe and profitable in these difficult times.”



Productivity through people, quality and the environment.

- Minas Basin Pulp & Paper, a 24/7 operation employing 240 workers, uses Essential Skills approaches that include:
 - Using Essential Skills for General Educational Development (GED) exam preparation.
 - Providing training to help workers improve computer skills, numeracy and document use.
- **Outcomes:**
 - Machine efficiencies exceeded 80%
 - Absenteeism dropped over 40%
 - 25% of their employees have benefitted from workplace training
 - 75% obtained their GED or completed all 5 components
 - Accident rates dropped from 19.88 in 2003 to 1.5 in 2004

WHAT IS Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES)?

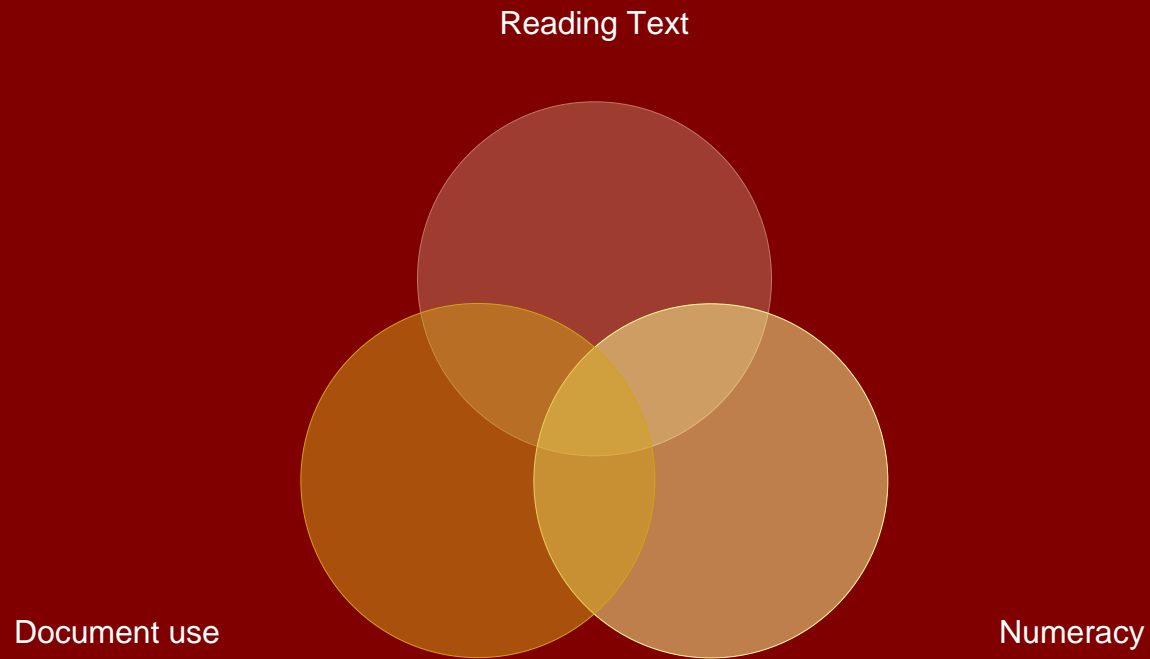
*It is a **National** credential*

- An effective paper and pencil test that uses workplace documents to accurately measure the three essential skills needed for safe and productive employment – Reading Text, Document Use and Numeracy.
- This assessment tool is significantly different from other tests of literacy skills. It has sufficient items to discriminate across the full range of skill levels demanded by jobs in Canadian workplaces. The test content is based on workplace documents and item responses mimic workplace tasks.

Process and Test Design

- Paper and pencil test that takes 2-2.5 hours to complete
- Puts the test taker in the role of the worker who must process information at varying degrees of difficulty to complete a task
- Test results are reported on a 500 point scale broken down into 5 levels
- Tests are all hand marked at Bow Valley College in Calgary Alberta and emailed back to Fanshawe College.
- It is NOT a test of manual dexterity

ES TESTED BY TOWES



TOWES

CANADA'S ESSENTIAL CREDENTIAL
RESULTS REPORT

Date: 14/03/2005

PAGE 1

Test: G2 – G Series

Name: Joe Client

THESE
ARE YOUR
SCORES

READING TEXT	DOCUMENT USE	NUMERACY
2 (3)	2	3

Congratulations, you successfully completed TOWES, a tool that uses real workplace documents to measure the three Essential Skills needed to be safe and productive at work. TOWES measures abilities in three essential skills areas:

- ✓ Reading text - which refers to tasks that involve reading sentences presented in notes, letters, memos, manuals, specifications, regulations, books, reports and journals.
- ✓ Document Use - which refers to tasks that involve the use of graphs, lists, tables, blueprints, schematics, drawings, signs and labels.
- ✓ Numeracy - which refers to tasks needed to complete numerical calculations, schedules, and measurements on the job.

How the Scores work

A 5-point scale is used to describe the differences in essential skills requirements for various jobs. The scale starts at Level 1 for basic tasks and goes to Level 5 for the most advanced tasks. Some jobs require higher levels of essential skills than others. For example, administrative clerks and bartenders both do Level 1 reading tasks when they read short notices at work, but administrative clerks are also required to read policy manuals which is rated at Level 3 because it is more complex. Many bartenders likely have the skills to read at Level 3 but their jobs do not require it.

The TOWES test you took used reading text, document use, and numeracy questions ranging in complexity from 1 to 4, on the 5-point scale. If your score on the top right hand corner of this page has two numbers with one in brackets like this 2(3), you scored Level 2 but your score was on the high end of Level 2 so you can likely do some Level 3 tasks too.

This is useful information!

The Canadian government has used the 5-point scale to determine the Essential Skills requirements for hundreds of occupations. Find out more about Essential Skills and the requirements for jobs you are interested in by looking at the Essential Skills Job Profiles (see Online Resources). Compare your scores to the scores of hundreds of jobs. Use your TOWES score to determine whether you need more training to further develop your Essential Skills. Practice your Essential Skills by doing exercises on the TOWES Measure Up website.

Online Resources

www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca

Packed with real-life examples, the Essential Skills Job Profiles tell you what workers do and how complex their tasks are.

measureup.towes.com

(do not add www before the website address). Practice your Essential Skills and explore careers at the TOWES Measure Up website.



More information about your Essential Skills Score

These tables provide more detailed information about your scores. The left hand columns present those skills that you likely have already mastered. The right hand columns outline tasks that are rated at skill levels higher than your score. If you wish to upgrade your skills, you may wish to contact your local community college or contact TOWES at (403) 410-3200 or online at www.towes.ca for more information.

Reading Text - Your reading score was **4**

Your current reading skills include:	Reading skills to build on:
Reading relatively short texts to locate a single piece of information and following simple written directions. (Level 1)	
Reading more complex texts to locate a single piece of information or reading simpler texts to locate multiple pieces of information; and making low-level inferences. (Level 2)	
You may also have the ability to choose and integrate information from various sources or from several parts of a single text, make low-level inferences from multiple sources, and identify relevant and irrelevant information. (Level 3)	
Integrating and synthesizing information from multiple sources or from complex and lengthy texts, making complex inferences and using general background knowledge, and evaluate quality of text. (Level 4)	

Document Use - Your document use score was **3**

Your current document use skills include:	Document Use skills to build on:
Finding and using information from simple documents; and using key words, numbers, icons and other visual characteristics found in documents. (Level 1)	
Using information contained in simple documents with multiple pieces of information; making low level inferences about information requirements, accurately entering several pieces of information onto forms, finding information using one or two search criteria. (Level 2)	
Using complex documents where multiple pieces of information are organized in sections with subheadings. Integrating information from more than one document, combining information entry onto documents. (Level 3)	
	Using complex documents with multiple pieces of information organized in multiple sections with one additional component such as colour coding. Locating multiple pieces of information using the results of one search in a subsequent search. (Level 4)

Numeracy - Your numeracy score was **4(5)**

Your current numeracy skills include:	Numeracy skills to build on:
Completing simple numerical calculations where the operations required are clearly specified; totaling simple bills, making change, and making financial entries. (Level 1)	
Totaling calculations using discounts and taxes, calculating averages; using simple rates and proportions; and preparing simple financial summaries. (Level 2)	
Calculating areas of familiar shapes; taking precise measurements; comparing two options with differing cost structures, and calculating averages across sets of readings. (Level 3)	
Determining and calculating appropriate descriptive statistics; calculating areas and volumes of complex, irregular shapes; and decomposing a difference in rates between two data sets. (Level 4)	

Job Specific Scoring Examples

Cashier	2	2	2
Bartender	1	1	3
Server	2	2	2
Kitchen Helper	2	2	2
Host/Hostess	2	2	3
Cook	3	3	3
Baker	3	3	3
Desk Clerk	3	2	3

Automotive Scoring Examples

Automotive Painter	3	2	2
Automotive Installers and Servicers	4	3	3
Automotive Service Technician	3	3	3

Testimonials

- "Diavik Diamond Mines has greatly benefited from integrating TOWES essential skills training into our operations. We and our workers realize tangible benefits every day from the essential skills training we provide our employees".
- Leah Von Hagen
Manager, Workforce Development
Diavik Diamond Mines
- "Our goal is to have the trucking industry fully integrate TOWES essential skills assessments and upgrading into its human resource plans for recruitment, training and retention".
- Linda Gauthier
Executive Director
Canadian Trucking Human Resource Council
Ottawa, ON
- "Canadian research clearly shows that companies need workers with well-developed essential skills in order to compete in our knowledge-based economy. It is important that business leaders understand how they can use this research to their benefit".
- Scott Murray, Director
General Statistics Canada Institutions and Social
Unesco Institute for Statistics
Montréal, Québec
- Page Updated: Tuesday, July 22, 2008

We want to help you with your hiring and succession planning.

We propose the following:

- Meet with you one on one to discuss your specific needs and outline a plan.
- Group presentation to your employees to give them information about essential skills and how essential skills can help them.
- Conduct one on one needs assessment with your employees.
- Use an asset based model to build on workers' existing proficiencies and develop interventions to bridge skill gaps.
- Provide on-site, home based or college-based interventions to improve workers' Essential Skills

What can we offer to you?

- **FREE** testing to measure Essential Skills gains pre and post intervention. We can assist both existing employees and potential new hires.
- Job based profiles specific to your occupational needs
- An Essential Skills development plan specific to your needs



Any Questions?

In Summary

- **We are here to help you, your company and your employees to maximize your Essential Skills capacities.**