

GOAL



Working Together

Examining Employment, Education, and
Training Strategies for the Jamesville,
Beasley, and Keith Neighbourhoods

A report of the Labour Market Action Partnership

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Acknowledgments

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This project also required input from over 50 employers from lower Hamilton, and thanks are due to them for taking the time to tell us about the challenges they face in terms of recruiting and retaining workers.

One of the most compelling aspects of this research was talking with over 60 neighbourhood residents of Keith, Jamesville, and Beasley about their experiences with education, their hopes for better jobs, and their suggestions about how to achieve those better jobs. Without their bravery and courage to share those experiences and ideas, this research would not have been possible.

The Neighbourhood Planning Teams in Keith, Jamesville, and Beasley deserve substantial credit for identifying employment and training as an issue that will make neighbourhoods stronger, as well as giving feedback and guidance along the way to make sure the findings were action-oriented and grounded in the community.

Finally, we would like to thank Employment Ontario for the funding that made this work possible.

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Executive Summary

This research project began with the Neighbourhood Planning Teams in the Hamilton neighbourhoods of Jamesville, Beasley, and Keith identifying challenges in employment, education, and job-skill training among their residents. The increasing skill requirements of employers in local economies across Ontario have been noted by many organizations like Essential Skills Ontario, who said “low skilled jobs are becoming mid-skilled jobs, they all require technology”. In addition, in Hamilton alone, retirements are expected to create over 20,000 job openings in science, engineering, technology, business and finance – with most of these jobs requiring at least a two-year college diploma.

In partnership with the Neighbourhood Planning Teams, a project team made up of educators, community organizations, community developers, funders and led by Mohawk College, Workforce Planning Hamilton, the City of Hamilton’s Neighbourhood Action Strategy with funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities initiated this six-month research project with the following goal:

To work with neighbourhoods (residents, planning teams, organizations, and employers) to develop and implement strategies to improve high school completion rates, participation in post-secondary education and employment training that will lead to higher rates of labour force participation and better jobs for neighbourhood residents.

To achieve this goal, there were three sub-projects:

1. To identify the barriers, challenges, and solutions to employment, education, and training;
2. To engage Hamilton employers to better understand their experience and skill requirements;
3. To explore the concept of a neighbourhood-based Learning Annex as a tool to achieve the above stated goal.

Over the course of the research, an analysis of Labour Market conditions was completed for each neighbourhood. Best practice reviews were completed for high school completion, post-secondary attendance, and skills training programs. A review of Learning Annexes and Learning Centres were reviewed to provide examples of possible modes of delivery. Finally, information from over 65 neighbourhood residents, 55 employers, and 26 key informants was gathered.

Labour Market Analysis

A detailed labour market analysis of each of the three neighbourhoods was completed. This assisted in focusing our research questions. Among other things it revealed:

- Declining population growth ranging from -1% in Beasley to -10% in Keith
- Jamesville and Beasley neighbourhoods have much higher rates of immigrants and visible minorities than the city of Hamilton average, while Keith has below the city average for both groups
- Residents in these neighbourhoods have lower educational attainment than the city of Hamilton average, but younger cohorts are more likely to finish high school and attend college and university

- All three neighbourhoods have lower labour force participation rates, lower employment, higher unemployment rates and higher rates of people on social assistance than Hamilton as a whole.

Best Practices Review

A literature review and further research identified key findings and best practices related to high school completion, post-secondary attendance and skills training. A review of Learning Annex models in other communities revealed a wide range in size, number of sites, budgets, and functions of Learning Annexes across Canada and the U.S. Models included those that were a physical, geographical location (a building), a mobile model, or a virtual model. Key to most of these models is partnership.

Key Informant Interviews: Key Findings

As noted above 26 key informants from the **service provider or education** community were interviewed to identify barriers and explore solutions including a Learning Annex model. The major barriers identified to high school completion were family experiences, mental health, negative school experiences, and language. Recommended solutions included the current student success strategies and re-engagement work, strengthening and expanding mentorship and academic support programs, and building partnerships with community agencies. Educators and service providers proposed the following functions for a Learning Annex: raising aspirations around education and skill training, finding creative ways to engage neighbourhoods around education and training, engaging people where they already are (being mobile), building relationships with employers, offering expertise and navigation assistance, and accessible, innovative programming.

Sixty-five **neighbourhood residents** including youth were also contacted to identify their perspective on education and employment. Key concerns related to high school non-completion included child care/teen pregnancy, major family events or breakdown, negative school experiences, substance abuse, and language. Regarding post-secondary education, barriers included financial issues, needing more assistance and guidance, child care, more direct links to employment and language. The majority of residents interviewed were interested in the Learning Annex model although youth and adults had a somewhat different perspective. Youth were looking for opportunities around athletics, mobile services (to where youth already are), someone to help plan and navigate options, trips to campus, and financial incentives. Adults looked for training with direct links to employment, information/support around how to get started with training, on-site child care, on-line or blended learning opportunities, financial incentives, an accessible location, and specific training for foreign-trained professionals.

Also consulted were 55 **employers** across all three neighbourhoods. Amongst employers surveyed the employment outlook was generally positive. Most employers reported they have very little trouble attracting entry-level applicants generally, but do have more trouble with specialized positions, including the skilled trades. A majority of employers advised that the best way for neighbourhood residents to get hired in their workplace is to "go back to school and get the required diploma or degree". Employers were generally interested in the Learning Annex model but unsure of how to be involved.

Overall, the Steering Committee and Neighbourhood Planning Teams felt this research found very strong support and evidence for further development of training, skill building, and educational resources in the Keith, Jamesville, and Beasley neighbourhoods. The suggested priorities were: 1) increased resources and support around navigation of education and training pathways, 2) increased activities to raise aspirations and create engagement around training and education, 3) engaging employers in the overall process, 4) and reducing barriers and creating incentives to training and education programs.

Given the findings of the research, the report made the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

The Steering Committee and neighbourhood hubs should pursue resources for a Project Manager to coordinate the implementation and operationalization of a Learning Annex team.

Recommendation 2

The Jamesville, Keith, and Beasley Neighbourhood Planning Teams should create an Education and Training sub-committee who will work with the Project Manager to develop and guide this initiative into Phase 2.

Recommendation 3

Identify resources to create an Education and Training Navigator position by the conclusion of Phase 2 who will coordinate the activities of the Learning Annex Team to implement and oversee progress on these recommendations.

Recommendation 4

Create an interdisciplinary Learning Annex Team through re-alignment of existing resources. Team members should include (at a minimum): City of Hamilton Neighbourhood Action Strategy, Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program, Employment Ontario providers, Settlement Workers, Community Development workers, School Boards, Mohawk College, and McMaster University. This team needs to be able to provide services in different locations across the City.

Phase II implementation plans include developing community protocols and partnerships; engaging neighbourhood residents; strengthening employer relationships and creating strategies designed to raise aspirations around pursuing education and training. Work would be done in concert with the Education and Training sub-committees of neighbourhood planning teams and partnering organizations.

Recommendation 5

Explore the creation of an Opportunity Fund that would help make training or education financially manageable, particularly where existing programming does not provide enough assistance. This fund should be fast-tracked, and could be coupled with financial planning assistance.

Recommendation 6

Develop a child-care strategy that should include conversations with the Early Childhood Education program at Mohawk, the Ontario Early Years Centres, and also the Best Start Network.

Recommendation 7

Develop an Equity Strategy that will guide the implementation of a Learning Annex.

Recommendation 8

Ensure that the Learning Annex Team has expertise in settlement issues, and can offer service to people who do not speak English as a first language.

Recommendation 9

Assess the need for specialized training for the Learning Annex Team around supporting people with mental health issues and experiences of trauma.

Recommendation 10

The initial development of the Learning Annex should focus on the mobile component of service delivery. As the Learning Annex gains momentum and experience, additional strategies of program delivery should be explored: including "bricks and mortar" space and virtual/web-based programs.

Recommendation 11

Develop a strategy for the expansion of after-school programs like Pathways to Education or Rogers Raising the Grade to all students in Jamesville and Beasley neighbourhoods.

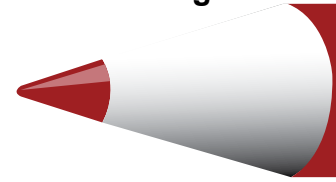
Recommendation 12

Work with school boards and post-secondary institutions to improve the data collection and dissemination about neighbourhood level high-school completion and post-secondary attendance.

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Introduction



The Jamesville, Keith, and Beasley neighbourhoods have come strongly together as leaders under the City of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy. They have each completed detailed neighbourhood plans and have Planning Teams in place that are responsible for implementing the plans. These Planning Teams include a mix of residents, community organizations, and institutions and have a demonstrated capacity for addressing challenging issues in their neighbourhoods. These diverse teams contribute countless volunteer hours to build safe and healthy communities and are grounded in the belief that everyone has assets that can be utilized and leveraged to improve neighbourhoods across the city.

Within these plans, increased high school completion, increased post-secondary education, access to apprenticeship programs and volunteer opportunities that will lead to job readiness and employment are recurring themes. In these neighbourhoods, poverty rates are much higher than the city average, and unemployment rates tend to be double or triple the city average. Rates of high school completion and attendance of post-secondary institutions are well below city averages. More than 17% of Beasley students do not complete their high school diploma, Jamesville has more than double Hamilton's proportion of students who do not complete high school. Finally Keith has almost three times the amount of students who don't complete high school as compared to the general Hamilton population. Additional challenges in these neighbourhoods include higher rates of recipients of social assistance, and lower rates of educational attainment by parents (which is a strong predictor of educational achievement by youth).

Most factors that are creating these challenges lie outside the neighbourhood boundaries: local labour markets across Hamilton, Ontario and Canada are shifting. According to the Conference Board of Canada, anticipated skills shortages will require job searchers to have post-secondary credentials to be competitive in the job market. Anticipated retirements in Hamilton by 2016 will provide an estimated 21,000 job vacancies. Employers need post-secondary graduates in science, engineering, technology, business and finance. The most widespread needs are for employees with two or three year college diplomas (57%); four year degrees (44%), and trades (41%)¹.

Industries in Hamilton that contribute significantly to the labour force include Construction, Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing, Health Care and Social Assistance, Business Finance, and Administration. Due to anticipated retirements, current job vacancies, and new business development, experts are predicting a shortage of skilled workers in these fields until 2021².

These broad changes in the labour market coupled with the development of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy present an opportunity for residents in the Jamesville, Beasley, and Keith neighbourhoods as well as their community organizations and partners. In partnership with these Neighbourhood Planning Teams, a project team led by Mohawk College, Workforce Planning Hamilton, and the City of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy with funding from the

¹ Conference Board of Canada 2013.

² Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment 2013, and Manifold, Superdemographics, 2012.

Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities initiated a six-month consultation process with the following goal:

To work with neighbourhood residents, planning teams, organizations, and employers to develop and implement strategies to improve high school completion rates, participation in post-secondary education and employment training that will lead to higher rates of labour force participation and better jobs for neighbourhood residents.³

There were three associated sub-projects under this goal that directed the research and consultations:

1. To work with neighbourhoods to identify the barriers to employment, training, continuing and further education, and to work with the neighbourhoods to develop strategies to overcome these identified barriers.
2. To engage a range of Hamilton employers (primarily specific to the neighbourhoods) to better understand their requirements for skills training, what skills competitive job applicants need to possess, the challenges they are currently facing when considering candidates as well as their recruitment techniques. This project will also build relationships between employers and the neighbourhoods to develop informed labour market planning and skills development.
3. The concept of a neighbourhood-based learning annex will be investigated as a tool to enable the stated project goal. This investigation will work with neighbourhoods, community organizations, and employers and may include the development of implementation plans, business cases and the required partnerships for a neighbourhood-based learning annex in Hamilton.

To carry out this project, a Steering Committee was formed to oversee the project's activities, provide guidance and support to the project strategist, advise on the analysis and recommendations, and monitor the project's timelines and deliverables. Members of the Steering Committee are noted in Appendix A.

Over the course of this extensive research and consultation, an analysis of Labour Market conditions was completed for each neighbourhood. Best practice reviews were completed for high school completion, post-secondary attendance, and skills training programs. A review of Learning Annexes and Learning Centres were reviewed to provide examples of possible modes of delivery. Finally, information from over 65 neighbourhood residents, 55 employers, and 26 key informants was gathered.

Results from this research and consultations is presented in the sections that follow. The report concludes with an Analysis and Recommendations section that pulls together the findings from each of the different sections, and makes a set of recommendations to implement the strategies in the Jamesville, Beasley, and Keith neighbourhoods.



Labour Market Neighbourhood Profiles, Jamesville, Beasley, and Keith Neighbourhoods

This section of the report looks at the labour market factors in the Jamesville, Beasley and Keith neighbourhoods. Much of the information presented here is from the 2006 Census as data for most of these neighbourhoods from the 2011 National Household Survey has been suppressed for data quality and/or confidentiality. Additionally, the authors would like to acknowledge the Social Planning and Research Council's work on Neighbourhood Profiles, as that report was an invaluable resource in compiling this information⁴.

In addition to census information, special data requests were made to determine the number of people in each neighbourhood who were receiving employment insurance, Ontario Disability Support Program or Ontario Works. This section then describes the most prevalent industries and occupations for residents in the neighbourhoods as well as a brief description of student performance in the appropriate schools who draw students from Jamesville, Beasley, or Keith.

In contrast to the City of Hamilton's 6.1% growth, all three neighbourhoods experienced a decline in population since 2001, ranging from -1% in Beasley to -6% in Jamesville to almost -10% in Keith.

- The total number of people in these three neighbourhoods fell from 17,025 in 2001 to 16,246 in 2011, a decline of 5% overall.
- In terms of the overall population of these three neighbourhoods, Jamesville represents 54% (8,705), Beasley 35% (5,854), and Keith 11% (1,687).

Jamesville and Beasley neighbourhoods have much higher rates of immigrants and visible minorities than the City of Hamilton average, while Keith has below the City average for both groups.

- Immigrants make up 44% of Beasley residents, 35% of Jamesville residents, and 14% of Keith residents, compared to 25% of Hamilton.
- Overall, there are a total of 4,280 residents who identify as a visible minority or 26% of the population compared to 14% of the City of Hamilton. The most common visible minorities are Black (1,165), Chinese (760), and Southeast Asian (575), and Latin American (495).

The rate of lone parent families is higher in all three of these neighbourhoods than in the City of Hamilton overall.

- The overall rate of lone parent families for these three neighbourhoods was 36%, higher than the City average of 23%.

Overall, residents in these three neighbourhoods have lower educational attainment than the City of Hamilton, but younger cohorts are more likely to finish high school and attend college and university⁵.

- 40% of residents over 15 years old in these neighbourhoods do not have a high school diploma, compared to 25% of Hamilton.
- 32% of residents over 15 years old have completed some sort of post-secondary education, compared to 48% of Hamilton

**TABLE 1: AGE COHORT COMPARISON, EDUCATION LEVELS, 2006
JAMESVILLE, KEITH, AND BEASLEY**

	25-34 YEARS	35-64 YEARS
No high school cert or diploma	22%	36%
High school diploma or equiv	31%	27%
Apprenticeship or trades cert	10%	9%
College cert, diploma, degree	20%	16%
University diploma, degree	15%	11%
Other (some university)	2%	1%

Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census⁶

- Younger generations in all neighbourhoods are more likely to complete high school and go to college. Among 25-34 year olds, 22% had no certificate, diploma or degree, compared to 36% of 35-64 year-olds. Additionally 20% of the 25-34 year olds had a college certificate, diploma, or degree, compared with 16% for ages 35-64 in all neighbourhoods. The 25-34 year olds were also more likely to have a university education (14% vs. 11%).
- According to the Hamilton Spectator's Code Red, high school non-completion rates were two-three times higher than the citywide average.

All three neighbourhoods have lower labour force participation rates, lower employment and higher unemployment rates than Hamilton as a whole.

- All neighbourhoods have a lower percentage of residents who are participating in the labour force.
- In 2006, the unemployment rates varied from slightly higher in one neighbourhood to more than double the City of Hamilton average in the others.

All three neighbourhoods have higher rates of people who receive social assistance both Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program than the city average, while the percentage of residents receiving employment insurance benefits was similar to the city average.

⁵ Current graduation rates may be higher than the data presented, as this data is based on 2006 census data, and overall high school graduation have risen substantially in the last six years across Hamilton and Ontario. Unfortunately, the 2006 census is the most recent data available at the neighbourhood level.

⁶ This data is from 2006 and could have changed since that time. However, we expect that the trends compared to the overall city averages have not changed dramatically.

TABLE 2: RATES OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND EI, JAMESVILLE AND HAMILTON

	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS IN ALL THREE NEIGHBOURHOODS	CASES PER 1,000 PEOPLE	HAMILTON AVERAGE PER 1,000 PEOPLE
Ontario Works cases ⁷	1,295	80	26
ODSP cases ⁸	1,861	114	39
Employment insurance claimants ⁹	1,020	63	70

Source: City of Hamilton 2011, 2013, Statistics Canada 2011

- In October 2011, there were triple the City's rate of people receiving OW and ODSP in these three neighbourhoods.
- The number of employment insurance claimants is similar to the City average, and has returned to pre-recession levels.

As tables 3 and 4 show, these three neighbourhoods have much higher percentages of workers in sales and service occupations than Hamilton as a whole.

- Trades, transport and equipment operators and manufacturing occupations were higher than average.
- These three neighbourhoods have lower than average percentages in health, social science and education, and government occupations.
- Table 4 breaks down the top occupations into more detail: salespeople, food service workers, and cashiers are most common in retail. Truck drivers, material handlers, and labour jobs dominate the trade/transport occupations. In the processing/manufacturing occupations, labourers and motor vehicle assemblers and inspectors are most common.

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7 As of October 2011, Special Data Request City of Hamilton
8 As of October 2013, Special Data Request City of Hamilton
9 For the year of 2011. Statistics Canada, Special Data Request. Tax Filer Data.

TABLE 3: OCCUPATIONS OF THREE NEIGHBOURHOODS BY TYPE, COMPARED TO HAMILTON AVERAGE, 2006

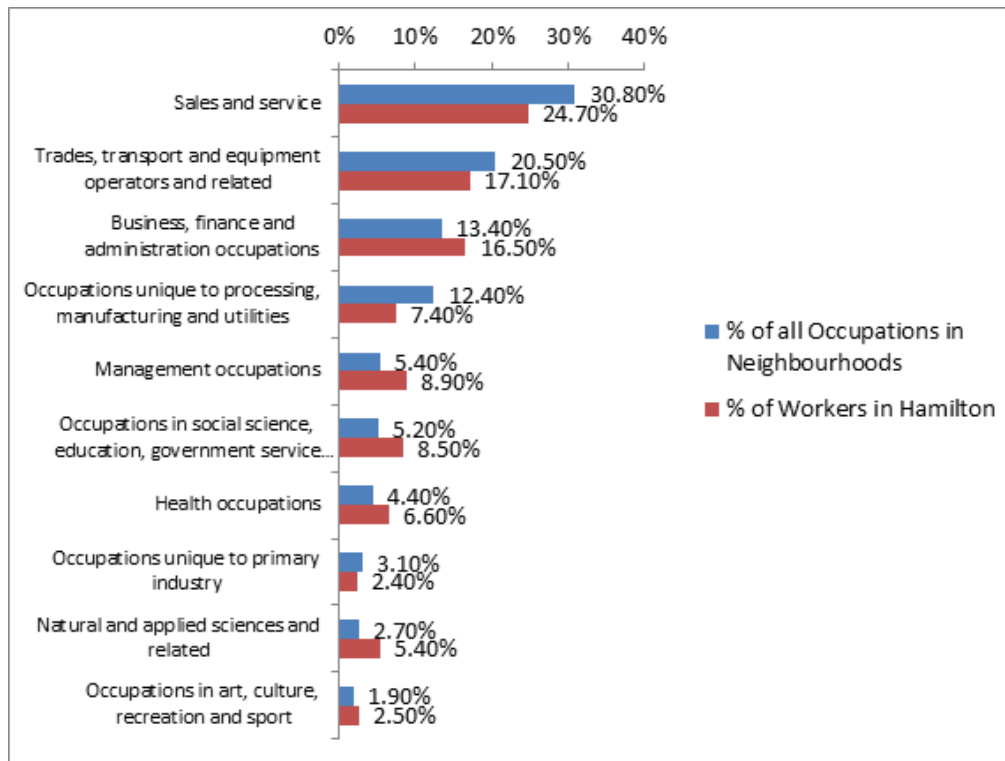
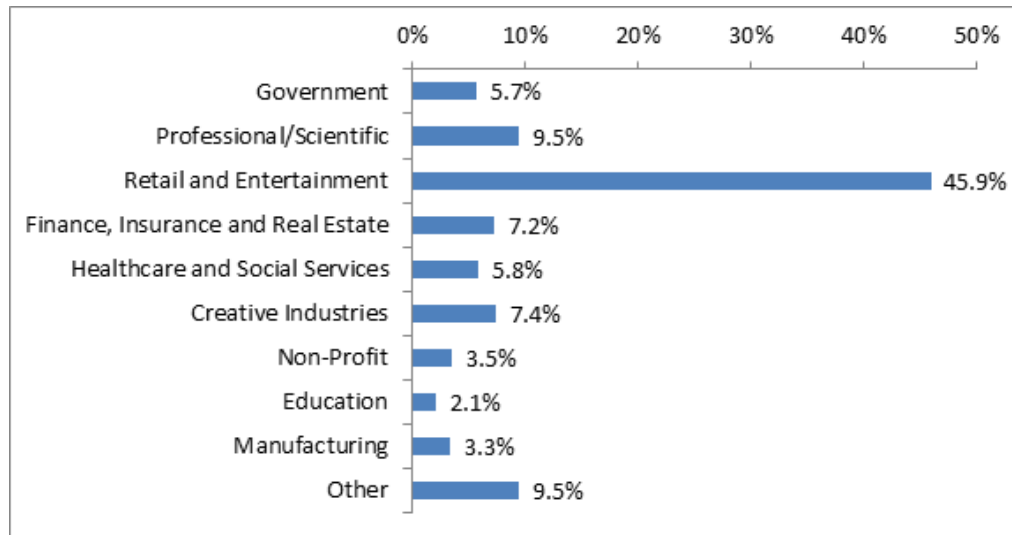


TABLE 4: DETAILED OCCUPATIONS IN 3 NEIGHBOURHOODS TOP OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS, 2006

SALES AND SERVICE	TRADES, TRANSPORT AND EQUIPMENT OPERATORS AND RELATED	OCCUPATIONS UNIQUE TO PROCESSING, MANUFACTURING, UTILITIES
Retail salespersons and sales clerks	Truck drivers	Labourers in food, beverage and tobacco
Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related	Material handlers	Motor vehicle assemblers, inspectors and testers
Cashiers	Construction trades helpers and labourers	Other labourers in processing, manufacturing and utilities

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

TABLE 5: EMPLOYER DISTRIBUTION BY EMPLOYMENT TYPE, KEITH, JAMESVILLE, AND BEASLEY, TOTAL NUMBER OF BUSINESSES – 1,358



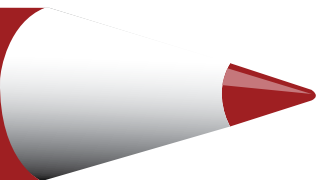
Source: City of Hamilton, Economic Development and Planning

Almost half of employers are in the retail and entertainment category in these neighbourhoods.

- This data shows the overwhelming retail and entertainment sector that is located in the downtown neighbourhoods. These numbers only account for the overall number of employers, and does not reflect the number of employees that each employer may have.

Student performance in school, as measured by the EQAO and OSSLT, is a challenge for both elementary and secondary schools that draw from these neighbourhoods.

- The schools with students from these neighbourhoods in the Public Board are: Hess St., Bennetto, Cathy Wever, and Dr. J. Edgar Davey Elementary schools. Sir John A MacDonald is the secondary school. For the Separate School Board, St. Lawrence, St Brigid, and St. Anne's are the elementary schools and Cathedral is the secondary school.
- In 2012-13, the public elementary and secondary schools had EQAO and OSSLT scores that were below the Public Board average for Grades 3, 6, 9, and the Grade 10 OSSLT.
- In 2012-13, St. Lawrence was above average in Grade 3 writing, while other grade 3 scores were below average across the elementary schools. St. Lawrence was above average for all Grade 6 subjects, St. Ann's for Grade 6 math, and St. Brigid for Grade 6 writing. Cathedral was below the Separate Board's average in Grade 9 Applied and Academic math and Grade 10 Literacy tests.



Best Practices High School Completion

A high school diploma is increasingly viewed as the absolute minimum requirement in today's job market. Students who do not complete high school face challenges not only finding jobs, but also advancing into higher paid positions in the workforce. Given the higher rates of high school non-completion in the Keith, Jamesville, and Beasley neighbourhoods, this project reviewed the literature regarding best practices in increasing high school completion rates. Preference was given to Canadian and where possible, Ontario, information.

There are different ways to measure high school completion.

In Ontario in 2010-2011, the percentage of students finishing within four years was 72%, within five years rose to 83%, and by the age of 25, 91%. These rates have steadily increased from 2003, when the five-year graduation rate was 68%¹⁰. The generally accepted standard is to use the five-year graduation rate.

The Province of Ontario is in the midst of a major policy initiative to increase high-school graduation rates that began in 2003.

This broad ranging strategy includes student success teachers in each high school, funding for re-engaging early leavers, innovations in co-op, credit recovery, and dual credit programs¹¹.

Early school leaving is a process, not an event.

The Community Health Systems Resource Group of Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children has defined early school leaving as "a long process of disengagement and alienation that can be preceded by less severe types of withdrawal (such as truancy and course failure)¹².

There are *risk* factors and *protective* factors for early school leaving that vary by sub-population (e.g. young men, young women, Aboriginal students, newcomer students).

Successful programs to prevent early school leaving reduce risk factors and build on protective factors. The following table displays the main risk and protective factors for some sub-populations.

10 Ministry of Education, Ontario 2012, *Auditor General's Report on Student Success Strategy*.

11 Ibid

12 This definition comes from the Community Health System Resource Group's 2005 seminal research paper for the Ontario Ministry of Education entitled *Early School Leavers: Understanding the lived reality of student disengagement from secondary school*.

**TABLE 6: UNDERSTANDING EARLY LEAVING: MAIN RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS
ADAPTED FROM COMMUNITY HEALTH SYSTEMS RESEARCH GROUP**

SUB-POPULATION	MAIN RISK FACTORS	MAIN PROTECTIVE FACTORS
Young Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wanting to or needing to earn money limited social support for staying in school drug and alcohol misuse incarceration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> co-op programs (can earn money and stay in school) availability of alternative school settings
Young Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pregnancy and/or childbirth caring for family members leaving parental home due to abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in-school or subsidized day care counseling services
Aboriginal Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cultural legacy of colonialization limited family support for staying in school adult role taking regular attendance distance one must travel to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> alternative culturally based schooling family involvement caring teachers above average academic performance self-determination
Youth who are LGBT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> family stress and depression difficult school social climate alcohol and drug abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> above average academic performance supportive families and teachers involvement in community programs
Newcomer Youth (1st and 2nd generation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> language difficulties non-recognition or inaccurate recognition of prior academics unfamiliarity with Canadian school system cultural dissonance family financial stresses value differences between school and home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extended family involvement in school strong social supports a positive, inclusive school ethos
Visible Minority Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exposure to stereotypes and prejudice in school streaming into non-academic pathways difficulty with particular teachers or administrators higher rates of detentions/suspensions lower familial education levels & limited support for remaining in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strong familial involvement in the lives of youth inclusive school environments free of racism school curriculum that is reflective of diversity of students
3rd + Generation Youth (Canadian born youth whose ancestors have been here 3+ generations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> family stress attempting to live on one's own alcohol or drug misuse mental health issues involvement in criminal activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> involvement in extra-curricular activities youth who liked school generally youth who spoke of having understanding teachers, principals, and support staff.

Schools need to identify students who are at-risk of leaving early.

The literature shows that early high school leaving is a long-term process, and not a sudden decision. Some potential indicators of risk are: missing credits in grade 9 or 10, truancy or absenteeism, high rates of mobility, and lower than average academic achievement scores. As stated by the Promising Practices Network:

A prerequisite for developing strategies that promote high school graduation at the individual level or the school level is obtaining appropriate information. That is, decision-makers need to be able to accurately monitor rates and trends in overall school dropout and completion numbers and to identify students who may be at risk of dropping out.¹³

Early intervention programs take place before high school and include programs that focus on early learning and school readiness, parental involvement in kindergarten, enhanced reading/writing programs (supplementary to school) and socio-emotional programs.

In her literature review of educational programming for at-risk children, Maldonado (2012) found that intensive early learning can have long-lasting effects on children's academic performance and numeracy learning. Additionally, students who participated in pre-school were less likely to have grade retention later. Finally, the literature demonstrated strong support for developing and strengthening teacher-student relationships in classrooms and promoting parental involvement.

Later interventions cover a wide range of strategies that include mentoring, flexible learning environments, sufficient re-entry points, support addressing school mobility and engagement, academic improvement programs, "non-academic" skill building programs, and emphasizing career options and training.

These programs were often developed to focus on a specific sub-population of at-risk youth (i.e. young women, newcomer youth, etc.)

Mentorship programs varied from tutoring programs to non-academic programs that focused on building relationships between an at-risk student and a particular adult (Croninger¹⁴ notes these relationships are even more effective when that adult is a teacher). A second common theme was the benefit of a flexible learning environment and alternative school¹⁵. This flexibility can be offered in terms of the curriculum (allowing self-paced learning), location or type of school, and different credit recovery or dual credit program options. Sufficient re-entry points into the school system acknowledge that early school leaving is a process and not an event, and the student may need multiple paths to re-enter school. Another common theme of promising programs address student mobility. Recommended programs included wraparound services, simply providing bus tickets to the former school, tutoring programs or other stabilizing support programs.¹⁶

13 Promising Practices Network 2011, p. 4.

14 Croninger, R. G., & Lee, V. E. (2001). Social capital and dropping out of high school: Benefits to at-risk students of teachers' support and guidance. *Teachers College Record*, 103(4), 548-581. Cited in Maldonado 2012.

15 Choi, in Maldonado 2012; Community Health Systems Research Group 2005; Ministry of Education Alberta 2009.

16 Ministry of Education Alberta 2009.

Academic improvement programs focus on topic specific skill development (i.e. math or language) and are often deemed beneficial to prevent early school leaving. Programs are intended to help participants improve performance in the academic areas of school, and are particularly effective for students with lower academic achievement scores, English language learners or who have fallen behind in credits¹⁷. Non-academic skill programs can focus on problem-solving skills, social interactions, and decision-making. These non-academic programs are often combined with mentorship programs to promote a relationship with a caring adult.

Broader strategies at the school-community level can also reduce early leaving.

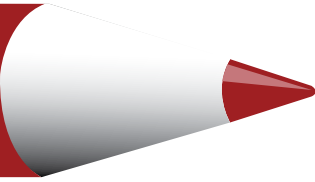
These strategies include smaller class sizes (which help build relationships between students and teachers), and increased collaboration between child welfare, child justice, and education sectors (this included the Alberta Ministry of Education recommendation that the post-secondary sector be more involved in the effort to improve high-school completion)¹⁸.

Finally, there was a group of recommendations that examined continued training for teachers around early high school leaving and potential strategies to reduce leaving. These recommendations often including working with broader communities to better understand the process of early school leaving and working to fill any systemic gaps that exist.



17 Ministry of Education, Alberta 2009.
18 Community Health Systems Research Group 2005.

3.1



Best Practices Post-Secondary Attendance

Given the changing nature of Ontario and Canada's economy, post-secondary education (PSE) is becoming more and more important to a person's job prospects. With rates of post-secondary attendance (college and/or university) in the Beasley, Keith, and Jamesville neighbourhoods below city averages, this project examined information on what factors were likely to increase attendance of post-secondary education.

This information was gathered based on feedback and suggestions from the project's Steering Committee and supplemented by an Internet search. Themes from the literature review are presented here.

Parents' educational history, not income, is the biggest determining factor in whether a student will pursue PSE¹⁹.

Finnie (2011) states: "a single year of parental education has a greater positive impact on the likelihood of their son/daughter attending PSE than does an extra \$50,000 of household income". As a result, many effective programs involve a student's family in PSE promotion and pre-college programs²⁰. Finnie goes on to say *"in addition to addressing financial constraints (loans, tuition levels, and grants), more attention should be devoted to improving student motivation and performance... providing better information to students and their families about the costs and benefits of education... and carrying out other interventions targeted at the early rooted and family-based factors that seem to be the most important determinants of success²¹"*.

The major reasons Ontario youth gave for not attending PSE included uncertainty about career direction, dissatisfaction with high school experiences, and financial concerns.

Youth who were eligible to apply for PSE, but chose not to, talked about not knowing which program to pursue. Many also noted negative high school experiences that included poor marks, poor relationships with teachers and/or guidance counselors, or social isolation. There was an additional, very common, group of concerns about financing a college education, uncertainty about the cost-benefit of a college education, and needing to continue holding a job to support themselves²².

The major reasons Ontario young adults gave for returning to school after working were career related.

Young adults who had chosen not to pursue PSE after high school and had gone to work were interviewed about the reasons they chose to return to PSE. The reasons included lack of advancement at work, lack of career opportunities without it, less concern about financial issues, clarification of career focus because of work, and witnessing of peers who had academic success in a college program and consequently, an interesting, financially rewarding career²³.

19 Finnie 2011.
20 Engle 2005.
21 Finnie, 2011, p.1.
22 King et al. 2009.
23 Ibid.

The likelihood of attending post-secondary education varies based on ethno-cultural background, socio-economic status, and gender.

Sweet et al (2010) argues that the most effective way to raise the provincial rate of post-secondary attendance is to increase under-represented groups, and this means pre-college programs need to target specific groups in their outreach strategies. Examining Toronto District School Board data, and noting significant individual variation, Sweet (2010) found that 1st generation East Asian immigrants were the most likely to attend PSE, while Caribbean and African youth were the least likely. Aboriginal youth are also less likely than non-Aboriginal youth to attend post-secondary, and particularly university, education. More young women than men attend university, while young men are much more likely to enter apprenticeship programs. College attendance rates between genders are similar²⁴. A combination of ethno-specific, and gendered PSE-prep programs can be effective, as well as a focus on language skills and building a base knowledge of the PSE system and how it operates²⁵.

The process of increasing post-secondary attendance can be divided into four stages: 1) raising aspirations for college, 2) navigating the admissions process, 3) easing the transition to post-secondary education, and 4) retaining the students.

Consistent support across all of these stages is crucial for success, and each step is dealt with separately below.²⁶

Raising aspirations for college is the first step in increasing post-secondary attendance.

*"Many ... students had no or low aspirations to go to college before participating in a pre-college program. They did not think a college education was necessary to get a job and they did not think going to college was possible because they could not pay or could not get in"*²⁷. Engle (2005) recommends assertive and active pre-college programming that helps students connect college with job/career interests, get informed about college options and how to pay for it, perceiving themselves as college material, understand that college is possible, and pre-college program staff getting personal and having high expectations. Other authors also recommend bridging programs (both summer and ongoing) and college prep programs²⁸. Other authors argue that understanding the financial aid available and financial implications are key predictors of post-secondary attendance²⁹.

24 Sweet 2010.
25 Lum & Grabke 2011.
26 Engle 2005.
27 Engle 2005, page 5.
28 Terenzini 1995.
29 Lohfink and Paulson 2005.

Students need support navigating the admissions process.

The admission process requires consistent support for many students – particularly first generation students whose parents have not experienced it. Engle suggests that pre-college programs can help students arrange entrance requirement exams, work with families and students around making financial arrangements (including financial aid), college visits, and making connections in the community.

Once admitted, students need assistance in the transition into PSE.

Engle and other authors identified summer orientation or weekly programs to build exposure and comfort on campus, academic support (tutoring and study skills groups), college visits, and working with professors and teachers to develop mentoring relationships. As with the other stages, Engle recommends family involvement in the transition, as they too will be in transition, particularly in first generation families.

Students require support after they are admitted to ensure retention in PSE.

As one student said, “it’s much more difficult to stay in college than to get in”³⁰. Authors recommended continued access to pre-college support counselors as often students will return to them for advice and support. Continued access to financial information and counseling is important, as many students are more likely to drop out due to accruing debt and financial concerns rather than course failure³¹. There is some evidence that work-study placements can alleviate some financial pressure, while having the added benefit of building social relationships on campus. Finally, higher expectations around academic performance were one of the largest challenges for first generation students, and support such as tutoring, help with study skills, and academic enrichment programs have been beneficial³².



30 Engle 2005, p. 4.

31 Lohfink and Paulson 2005.

32 Engle 2005.

Best Practices Skills Development



As in the previous two sections, changes to the labour market are requiring an increasingly complex set of skills on the part of workers. Workers without these skills are among the most vulnerable in our economy; indeed, 80% of the jobs lost in the last recession were lost by people without post-secondary education. Additionally, more jobs that have historically required lower skills now require expertise in technology (or are being replaced by technology) as many sectors become more automated. Essential Skills Ontario has said “low skilled jobs are becoming mid-skilled jobs – they all require technology”³³.

In this environment, lifelong learning and skill training become more and more necessary. Additional skill and education training can mean better jobs and better pay. The benefits of this training are not limited to the workplace however. In a recent international survey, the OECD found that more training and education led to increased civic engagement, increased trust of others (social cohesion), and better overall health³⁴.

This section looks at some of the key themes and trends identified in the literature around skill training programs across North America.

Programs should align skills training with current labour market needs.

Programs that are offering training need to reflect local labour market surpluses and shortages in real time. This often means working more closely with employers to determine what needs they have and what skills they are looking for. In this way, skills training programs can become a “pipeline” of sorts to employers, and employees are more likely to find immediate employment³⁵. Several innovative programs are working with employers to develop specific industry recognized credentials to meet local demand for labour.

Skills training programs and opportunities need to be available to all and offered with flexibility.

“Individuals with low skills are unlikely to engage in education and training on their own and tend to receive less employer training, therefore second-chance options can offer them a way out of the low skills/low wage trap”³⁶. The OECD reviewed skills training programs across its 22 member countries and found higher participation levels where there were incentives, tax breaks, and economic rewards for people who took part in the programs. Additional supports such as child-care were very important in determining whether people participated. Finally, the scheduling of these programs need to acknowledge that many participants are likely working in precarious, irregularly scheduled jobs that may interfere with regular attendance³⁷.

33 Essential Skills Ontario 2012.

34 OECD 2013.

35 Essential Skills Ontario 2013.

36 OECD 2013.

37 Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity 2013.

Many people with low employment skills will require additional supports to complete training.

There were many different examples of the type of supports people may need when taking skills training programs. Wraparound supports, pre- and post-employment supports, child care, and basic literacy assistance were common. Additionally, language assistance for English language learners as well as workplace orientation and expectation programs for newcomers were helpful in the completion of skills programs. Several programs, including the IBEST program (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training) from the U.S. require a mentor from both the literacy network and the industry. These mentors are then able to offer support as required.

Most programs blend specific skill development with basic literacy, digital literacy, and problem solving skills.

For example, in New Brunswick, Moosehead Breweries introduced new technology to their processing plant. With New Brunswick's Workplace Essential Skills Program, workers were trained in the new technology, but also a curriculum of basic digital literacy skills, document use, critical thinking/problem solving and working with others. This course was then expanded to the entire Moosehead workforce³⁸. These training programs are in line with employer expectations, as reported by Munro (2013): "employers are looking for job candidates with better 'essential skills' – not only employable technically".

Skill development can be offered in small "stackable" credentials with multiple entry points.

Essential Skills Ontario³⁹ reviewed a system called a "career ladder" that they consider very useful in skills training: the offering of short term, "stackable", blocks of training that people can complete as they are able. This form of skills training allows people who do not have larger blocks of time to allocate to training sessions. Employers, employees, and trainers develop a series of certificates or blocks that combine a set of academic skills and industry experience that will result in advancement in the workforce.

Pre-employment bridge programs that emphasize basic skill acquisition and the workplace are common and effective.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Sector Skills Program offers 6 weeks of in-class training with 6 weeks of work placement in retail, food service, and building maintenance positions. Employees receive pay for their participation. In Manitoba, a program called Northern Workers for Northern Jobs, workers participated in a 12-week Introduction to Industry Program which served as an introduction to the company's own 8-week training program⁴⁰. IBEST offers 6 – 8 week programs in health care, manufacturing, repairs and maintenance, and transportation. In all of these courses, basic skills are emphasized in addition to job-specific technologies⁴¹.

38 Provincial and Territorial Labour Market Ministers 2013.

39 Essential Skills Ontario 2013b.

40 Provincial and Territorial Labour Market Ministers 2013.

41 Essential Skills 2013a.

Given the changing technology of work in all sectors, there is a need for ongoing flexible digital literacy programs.

The consensus among the reports reviewed for this project was that the workplace is changing. Technological innovations are changing what work we do and how we do that work. Essential Skills Ontario has said "low skilled jobs are becoming mid-skilled jobs – they all require technology"⁴². Given that new reality, all workers, and particularly those with low levels of education and skills, will need to take part in digital literacy improvement programs to be active players in the labour market.

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4

Learning Annex Review

In order to get a better understanding of how other communities and neighbourhoods are delivering services like a Learning Annex (or a Learning Centre)⁴³, this research looked at 18 examples across Canada and the United States. These examples were recommended by the Steering Committee and supplemented by an Internet search. This review was not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to show the range of approaches that are currently being offered.

There is a wide range in size, number of sites, budgets, and functions of Learning Annexes across Canada and the U.S.

This review found a wide variety of approaches to delivering a Learning Annex. These ranged from the multi-million dollar Netter Centre in Philadelphia to a converted Tractor Trailer in Northern Ontario's Cambrian College. Nunavut's Arctic College with 27 satellite locations across the North and Quebec's Community Learning Centres with 37 locations in schools demonstrated the multi-site approach, while York's Community Engagement Centre, Toronto's Centre for Community Learning and Development, and Winnipeg's Innovative Learning Centre were examples of the single site delivery system. The funding for these initiatives came from a wide variety of sources: government, large corporate gifts, foundations, and other fundraising.

There are several different ways of delivering a Learning Annex: a physical, geographical location (a building), a mobile model, and a virtual model. The geographical location is by far the most common model that was reviewed.

Most of the Learning Annex models were delivered as part of a physical, geographical location (a building or set of buildings). York's Community Engagement Centre is located in the Jane-Finch neighbourhood of Toronto, and one of its mandates is to strengthen relationships between York and the Jane-Finch community. Nunavut's Arctic College has 27 different locations in different communities where its programs and services are offered. Both Winnipeg's Innovative Learning Centre and the Netter Centre at the University of Pennsylvania were consciously located in downtown, distressed areas of their respective cities. There were also examples, particularly Community Learning Centres in Quebec, where public schools were transformed into community hubs that offered lifelong learning opportunities to youth and their families. This last example shows that, in contrast to the examples above, a Learning Annex does not need to be a standalone service or building.

There were also examples of mobile Learning Annex approaches. Mobile approaches included Cambrian College who converted a tractor-trailer into a mobile skilled trades learning centre with 1,800 square feet of learning space with individual workstations. This model is in operation in Northern Ontario and travels to remote and Aboriginal communities to provide several months of training per community primarily for jobs in the mining industry. Locally, the YMCA has a new "Y on Wheels" program that allows a staff person to travel to different neighbourhood hubs

⁴³ In this review, both Learning Annexes and Learning Centres were reviewed. This paper uses "Learning Annex" and includes Learning Annexes, Learning Centres, and Community Knowledge Centres.

to determine what kind of programming neighbourhood residents want. These programs are then delivered within neighbourhoods. NeighbourWorks America is a mobile program where professional facilitators are available to deliver short certificate programs (5 day, or weekend) on topics like affordable housing, neighbourhood leadership, and citizen engagement.

Examples of virtual programs included Operation Springboard's Community Learning HUB (Toronto). This model offers a variety of digital resources and curriculum designed to build technological and life skills for youth. These programs include: Girls Group – a gender based self esteem program, Financial Literacy, Substance Abuse Prevention, Anger Management, Vocational Programming, Aboriginal Programs, and Employment. Trained facilitators deliver these programs. There are 33 Community Learning HUBs across Ontario. Locally, the YMCA is one provider of these programs. There are also virtual resources that allow for courses to be delivered virtually (often this is distance education). The Independent Learning Centre (ILC.org) offers a variety of secondary school on-line courses and curriculum, while Ontariolearn.ca is a collaboration of Ontario's 24 community colleges to offer over 1,000 college courses on-line.

In terms of virtual options, two examples from states in the U.S. include Louisiana Connect (<http://www.louisianacconnect.org>) and Michigan CAN (<http://www.micollegeaccess.org>). The Louisiana Connect site offers a vast array of information related to career planning and training, job application sites, financial aid information and calculators for colleges and universities across Louisiana. It also includes information for and from Industry partners, and targets different information for middle school and high school students, parents of middle school and high school students, as well as adult learners. Michigan CAN is a state-wide organization that applies its web presence and information to attain its goal of having 60% of state residents having college or university degrees by 2025. They particularly focus on increasing educational outcomes for low-income students, first generation college attendees, and students of colour. Michigan CAN also provides support to local college access networks across the state of Michigan.

There are different functions of the Learning Annex, and they vary by community. Several focus on neighbourhood and community development, several focus on adult education and skills training (high school level), while some serve as a foundation for post-secondary education and more advanced skills training opportunities (college/university level).

While there is some overlap between functions of the Learning Annexes, there appeared to be several different functions in the models reviewed:

- **Neighbourhood or community development focused:** These approaches often included a specific mandate to strengthen communities and work with neighbourhoods as a part of their work. Examples include: Netter Centre (University of Pennsylvania), Innovative Learning Centre (Winnipeg), the Community Learning Centres in Quebec, and York's Community Engagement Centre.
- **Adult education and skills training focus (high school level):** These programs offer a range of secondary school completion and upgrading programs, as well as a range of skills training programs (leadership development, ESL for the Skilled Trades, Computer Training for Job Skills). Examples include: Centre for Community Learning and Development (Toronto), Selkirk Learning Centre (Manitoba) and NeighbourWorks America.

- *Foundation for Post-Secondary and Advanced Skills (college/university level):* These centres offer a range of programs with the longer term goal of encouraging post-secondary school attendance. Centres in this category offer programming in academic upgrading (college preparation), ESL, and Introduction to Post-Secondary (College Foundations or Bridging) prep courses. Programming also sometimes includes regular trips to campuses with potential students from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, alternative high school courses, and financial aid and admissions information. Examples include Nunavut's Arctic College, Winnipeg's Innovative Learning Centre, and Cambrian College's Mobile Trades Program.

Partnerships are crucial components of almost every Learning Annex. Most Annexes partner with community organizations and schools to offer programming, tutoring, employment, provide space and other services.

There are examples of formal partnerships like the Innovative Learning Centre in Winnipeg partnering with CareerTrek to deliver a wide variety of programs (Young Mothers Take Charge, Campus Visits each Saturday for a 5 week term, Employment Skill Programs). Many of the Annexes partner to deliver employment programming, as well as ESL and mentoring services. In many cases, the Annex forms an umbrella for an array of services offered by many different community organizations.

Post-secondary institutions involved in Learning Annexes are able to leverage additional resources – students, athletics, and programs.

One of the other commonalities among the Annexes that were reviewed was the ability of post-secondary institutions to leverage additional resources from within the institution. For example, the Wii Chiiwaakarak Learning Centre in Winnipeg is run and staffed by the Aboriginal Student Society. The York Community Engagement Centre offers social work placements that provide support around social justice initiatives, free tax clinics with accounting students, and a program called "Shoot with This" with audio/visual technology students.

Athletics are a common way to engage youth. There are several examples of partnerships between the college/university's athletic teams and neighbourhood groups. These partnerships include mentorship and on-site (in neighbourhood) training programs, but the programs also offer access to youth to the institution's athletic facilities.

Many of the Learning Annexes offer short, skill-based modules on a wide variety of topics. The format of these courses is different from the traditional semester-based academic course offerings. In some cases, the topics of these modules are determined in consultation with the neighbourhoods or communities.

In many of the sites that were reviewed, short, skill-based modules were offered to participants. There were a wide range of programs offered: Selkirk Learning Centre offers Computer Fundamentals for Job Skills, and Business Planning for Self-Employment. The Toronto Community Foundation

has compiled an inventory of programs across Toronto that offer skill-based programming as a part of its Community Knowledge Centre Initiative⁴⁴: The Digital Den, which trains youth and adults in digital artwork and basic technology skills, a Women in the Trades program, a Women's IT program, as well as a range of Employment Support services. NeighbourWorks America offers 5-day and weekend programs in foreclosure avoidance, resident leadership, affordable housing, and boards and governance. There were Bridging programs for those entering post-secondary attendance as well as many different examples of workforce readiness programs. The concentrated, time-limited nature of the curriculum along with certification appears to appeal to people who need flexibility of schedule, and for whom the more typical semester schedule does not work as well.

There are several new Digital Innovation Hubs in Ottawa and Toronto that are using new technologies, including 3-D printers and audio-visual equipment, and hands on learning techniques, to promote an interest in education. There is a mobile Digital Literacy Classroom under development in London.

The Digital Innovation Hub in Toronto is led by the Toronto Public Library and is being offered at the Toronto Reference Library and will expand to the Fort York branch. The Hub offers 3D Design and Printing courses as well as a 3-D printer that can be rented for 5 cents/minute of printing (most projects take 30 minutes to print – cost of \$1.50). The Toronto Hub also offers digital design workstations that can be booked, and access to digital cameras, tablets, and computers.

The Ottawa space is a one-year pilot titled Imagine Space and is a partnership between the Ottawa Public Library and the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa. This initiative is focused on digital literacy, innovation and entrepreneurship and is expected to offer many of the same types of equipment and opportunities as the Toronto model. The US Embassy is funding the purchase of the equipment, while the Ottawa Public Library is providing the space and staff for the program.

There is also a mobile version of the Digital Innovation Model in London, ON. The DHMaker Bus is an initiative led by several University of Western students who are interested in using new technologies and equipment to engage a range of learners. Their plan is to convert a school bus into a mobile digital literacy classroom that will travel to different neighbourhoods and offer hands on learning experience with new technologies like 3-D printing, "upcycling" materials into jewelry and home decor, and opportunities to use technology and imagination to "create".

Locally, Mohawk's Access Strategy and several McMaster programs, the Discovery Program, Children's University and Discover Psychology, are innovative models that could be utilized in the development of a Learning Annex.

While not technically a Learning Annex, there are local programs that could be involved in a Hamilton Learning Annex. Mohawk's Access Strategy uses many different components to make post-secondary education more accessible. Access outreach workers are on-site in 12 different

schools in Hamilton to provide guidance and information (including financial counseling) to students who are thinking about post-secondary education. The Strategy has developed a Future Ready Incentive Program whereby high school students earn points by attending college events, and these points can be turned into tuition credits. The Access Strategy also includes running a summer camp for Aboriginal youth called Project Pathfinder that couples exposure to the Mohawk College Campus life with the promotion of traditional Aboriginal culture.

McMaster University has several different programs that are designed to promote an interest in learning among Hamiltonians. The McMaster Children and Youth University run by the Faculty of Health Sciences presents free, monthly lectures on Saturday mornings to children and youth age 7-14. Professors present kid-friendly lectures on a wide range of topics in science, arts, and social science. They accommodate up to 600 people for some lectures. The McMaster Discovery Program offers a free, non-credit, university level course to adults who have experienced barriers to education. Classes offered have included Voicing Hamilton (focusing on different expressions of art and Hamilton's history) and The People and Plagues of Hamilton (focusing on the history of disease and how it has shaped Hamilton's community). There are several other initiatives of note: Discover Psychology offers free, monthly lectures to adults on a range of accessible psychology topics. The Faculty of Social Sciences is also engaged with the Crown Ward Education Initiative, which is a multi-agency strategy to increase post-secondary attendance among youth who are Crown Wards.

The University of Winnipeg's Innovative Learning Centre and its related programs stand out as an exemplary model of a Learning Annex.

Located in downtown Winnipeg, the Innovative Learning Centre offers a wide range of social, upgrading, and skill programs. One of the factors that makes this program unique is that one objective of the program is to improve conditions in the community. Paired with an Opportunity Fund (fast-tracked scholarships), a Global Welcome Centre, the Wii Chiiwaakarak Learning Centre (an Aboriginal youth drop in), and a deep partnership with the athletic departments of UW, this model for a Learning Annex is one of the most comprehensive that was reviewed. Here are some highlights of what they have done:

- **The Innovative Learning Centre (ILC)** is based in partnerships with superintendents, principals, and teachers at inner city schools, students and their families. It offers programming after school, on weekends, and during the summer. They partner with Career Trek (www.careertrek.ca) to run a variety of programs including bringing at-risk students to campus every Saturday for a 5 week term for culture, athletic, and political events, Young Mothers Take Charge (employment support), and the M project which focuses on self-esteem for single mothers.
- **The ILC works closely with Model School** to involve high potential kids who are at risk of dropping out. The Model School has 20-25 students per year, and is an alternative education program primarily based in the inner-city neighbourhoods. Athletics are a major component of the Model School.
- **The Opportunity Fund** is a system of post-secondary bursaries that are fast-tracked and paired with financial counseling.

- **The Global Welcome Centre** works closely with the ILC and is funded through the Manitoba Department of Labour and Immigration. The Welcome Centre offers university preparation courses, mentorship and tutoring programs, computer skills, Immigrant Access Advisors, and the English Language Program also offers English for specific university programs and careers.
- **Wii Chiiwaakarak Learning Centre** also works closely with the ILC. It is a drop-in centre for inner-city residents managed by the Aboriginal Student Services Centre. There is free computer access, complementary academic programs, and homework clubs. They have over 1,000 visits/month.
- **The Athletics and Academic Task Force** is another component of the University of Winnipeg's strategy. The Athletic Program is highly involved, and sponsors local inner city teams, provides uniforms, coaches, and clinics. They sponsored a basketball clinic on convocation weekend that drew over 300 youth and had the additional benefit of youth being on campus during the convocation celebrations.
- **The Strategy** has also developed particular degree programs to attract certain students, e.g. a partnership with Winnipeg Education Centre to a 5 year part-time teaching degree with additional supports, skill development and a cultural component.
- **Finally, the University of Winnipeg's Community Renewal Corporation**, which manages all physical development of the university, is made up of half university members and half community members. This mix is intended to share the benefits of university developments with the larger community. It has resulted in construction of mixed affordable housing for students and non-student community members in at-risk Winnipeg neighbourhoods.



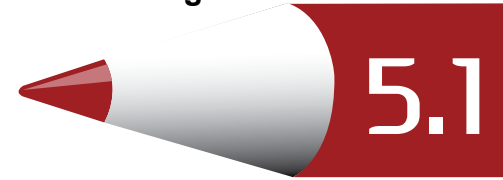
Results Key Informant Interviews

In order to better understand the barriers and potential solutions around high school completion, post secondary attendance and skills training programs, the Steering Committee identified a series of key informants who were subsequently interviewed. Key informants were selected based on several criteria: 1) professional knowledge of high school completion, post-secondary attendance, or skills training programs; 2) particular knowledge of one or more of the target neighbourhoods; and/or 3) unique insights and understanding of different sub-populations within the neighbourhoods. In all, 26 key informants were interviewed, and they are listed in Appendix B.

The key informant interviews were loosely structured discussions that were based on a set of questions (included in the Appendix). These questions asked about barriers and challenges for neighbourhood residents in terms of high school completion, post-secondary attendance, and skills training programs, as well as possible solutions. The discussion also explored the concept of a Learning Annex, what factors might be needed to make it successful, and what challenges it might face.

The results of the interviews were grouped into themes and are presented below. Section 5.1 describes the barriers and solutions, while Section 5.2 presents findings around the Learning Annex.





Barriers, Challenges and Solutions

Barriers to High School Completion

1. Family experiences (15)⁴⁵. This theme includes difficult family circumstances and major life events (divorce, death of a parent), but also a lack of expectation and support to complete high school. This theme also includes a number of responses where youth had to live independently while attempting to complete school because of family conflict. Key informants were clear that students' families were critically important in whether a student was able to complete high school, and many key informants suggested more involvement of the families in order to promote staying in school.
2. Mental health – depression and particularly anxiety (9). This theme identified that underlying anxiety and depression make it very difficult for some students to complete high school, reach out for help, or try new activities.
3. School experiences are negative (8). Key informants reported that experiences with bullying, not succeeding in class, conflict with teachers, or falling behind can all lead to negative associations with school. Negative experiences can lead to truancy and absenteeism, a precursor to early high school leaving. Several key informants pointed out that the negative associations can sometimes be linked to one particular school, and re-engagement with a different school can be of assistance.
4. Language and cultural transition (7). For newcomer students who do not speak English as a first language, language was one of the primary barriers to high school completion. Additionally, some students are coming from countries where education was not available (refugee camps, for example), which makes transition into a school environment very difficult, particularly for high school age youth.
5. Other barriers that were identified include: addictions/substance use (5), mobility of students (3), behavior problems (3), child care (3), and learning disabilities (2).

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Solutions to High-School Completion

1. Existing Student Success Strategies and Re-engagement Work (14). Key informants reported that, by and large, the school boards are leading the work on this issue with the Student Success Strategy and re-engagement teachers, as well as alternative school settings including Wilma's Place, Grace Haven, Turning Point, Notre Dame School and adult learning options. Key informants singled out initiatives like dual credit, blended learning opportunities, co-op programs, and flexible learning opportunities (modules) as very helpful. They did point out the alternative school Turning Point is full, and could be expanded.

45 The number in parentheses represents the number of times this theme was mentioned in the interviews.

2. Strengthening and expanding mentorship and academic support programs (13). Key informants talked about the importance of mentors and mentorship programs to help keep students in school. They also encouraged a broad understanding of what mentorship and academic support programs can mean: more than just tutoring programs. Academic support programs that offered incentives for post-secondary education were viewed as particularly strong. Key informants also spoke of the need for more partnerships with post-secondary students across a range of activities – particularly athletics and technology.
3. Building partnerships and relationships with community agencies (8). Many key informants encouraged increased partnership between agencies, programs, and the school boards to identify youth who are at-risk and find creative ways to support them.
4. Other solutions included: intervention in grade school (5), work with families (3), and increased financial incentives (3).

Barriers to Post-Secondary Attendance

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1. Lack of confidence and/or interest in post-secondary education ("educational readiness") (10). The most common barrier identified by key informants was that many neighbourhood residents, especially adults, are not actively considering post-secondary education. This may be due to a lack of confidence about their ability to succeed in a post-secondary setting, negative school experiences in high school, the need to work, or not envisioning themselves as someone who could go on to post-secondary education.
 2. Financial barriers (9). Key informants talked about financial barriers being very important to neighbourhood residents. They spoke of the need for education around the costs and benefits of post secondary programs, as well as the need for increased access to scholarships, bursaries, and additional financial aid information. They said that many neighbourhood residents are focusing on immediate needs, and find it difficult to take time to consider post-secondary options.
 3. Child care (5). Key informants spoke about the need for affordable, flexible child care for young parents (mothers, in particular). Many parents with young children express an interest in post-secondary education, but without flexible child care are unable to commit time to a program (night classes, for example). Key informants also noted that when children enter school, parents often have an opportunity to re-engage with either school or work.
 4. Anxiety and reluctance to enter new situations (5). Key informants identified anxiety as a common barrier to post-secondary education. Several gave examples of residents being too anxious to enter into new situations or locations, and who avoided taking on new challenges like post-secondary education because of high levels of anxiety.

Solutions to Increasing Post-Secondary Attendance

1. Create accessible opportunities to engage residents around education (14). Key informants repeatedly identified a need for positive engagement and experiences with educational programs. One of the more common suggestions included developing and/or building on shorter education opportunities to build confidence. Additional ideas included guest lectures, college bridging programs, technologically innovative demonstrations, as well as one or two day sample seminars. They also identified the need for a highly skilled staff position (educational navigator?) to work with community organizations, schools, and neighbourhood groups to help coordinate and expand on the work that is already taking place in the community.
2. Financial incentives (9). Most key informants supported increased financial assistance to encourage post-secondary education. These suggestions included lowering tuition costs, increased bursary/scholarship programs, as well as financial counseling to help people understand and obtain student loans. Again, key informants suggested that a navigation role would be helpful for people to find the relevant information.
3. Child Care Provision (5). Finding ways to provide affordable, flexible child care was a recurring theme among key informants. There were suggestions about providing child minding on site so that parents could participate in blended learning opportunities, as well as support for on-campus child care services. Increased availability of subsidized child care or possible linkage of child care supports to financial assistance were also suggested.
4. Increased exposure to campus (5). Key informants thought that increased exposure to campus, through high school trips, summer camps, or orientation sessions would help reduce student anxiety and increase familiarity with the setting. Trips to campus were also identified as a strategy to help with Solution #1 above – by building a sense that college and university campuses are a place that residents could belong and succeed.
5. Supports and mentorship for potential students (5). Key informants spoke about the need for ongoing social supports for students who are attending post-secondary programs. There were related suggestions like creating a “buddy” system with student mentors and helping to advocate for the students needs as they arise (help with testing, help applying for different financial aid, help with arranging classroom supports if necessary).

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Barriers to Skill-Training and Upgrading Programs

1. Lack of interest, confidence and “readiness” (13). Similar to comments on barriers to post-secondary education, key informants felt that many residents were not actively considering skill training and upgrading options. This was usually due to a need to find the fastest route to employment, lack of time to dedicate to upgrading, not knowing what programs might be available, and an aversion to more “education”. Key informants also talked about the need for assistance around learning disabilities and to accommodate different learning styles (don't rely only on reading out of books, look for “hands-on” training opportunities).

2. Anxiety and discomfort with new situations (6). Some key informants identified that many residents are not comfortable seeking out new programs where they are not comfortable, or with staff that they already have relationships with.
3. Child care responsibilities (5). Especially for young parents (primarily young mothers), key informants reported that child care was a major barrier. They said that unless programs offered on-site child care, parents with under school age children were unlikely to participate. Additionally, for training programs that were offered outside of school hours (9-3), lack of child care was one of the primary reasons for non-participation.

Solutions Around Skills Training and Upgrading

1. Create accessible opportunities to engage residents around skills training with direct links to employment (14). Key informants felt that many residents need to start with shorter, smaller steps in training (one day or weekend) and build from there as their confidence grows. Offering programs in places where people are already comfortable (in their neighbourhood) was important. They also said that by offering incentives, especially if training is linked directly to employment opportunities, people are more likely to participate. This could mean offering a certificate of completion, college credit, or other documentation that is of interest to employers who have current job openings. Finally, key informants suggested training programs should include basic skills like problem solving, teamwork principles, and digital literacy as well as specific job skills.
2. Case management and advocacy support for residents (7). A common theme among key informants was the need for support for neighbourhood residents as they look for training programs and make arrangements to attend. Key informants felt that the likelihood of people attending training sessions would be increased if they had someone they could work with to discuss potential opportunities and deal with any roadblocks that might occur along the way.
3. Financial and other material incentives (6). Some key informants talked about the importance of financial incentives in encouraging participation in skills training programs like Second Career, the Youth Employment Fund, or Threshold School of Building's ability to pay participants in training. They suggested that, in addition to strong links to employers, skills programs that offered incentives were more likely to draw people in. Not all examples were financial, several key informants talked about offering hands-on learning opportunities (how to wallpaper your house, how to build a birdhouse) where people could take something with them at the end of the training session.

Newcomer Issues

Especially in the Jamesville and Beasley neighbourhoods, key informants identified a theme around newcomer issues that focused on the diversity of newcomers, ranging from youth just here from refugee camps who may struggle in school to newcomer youth with highly educated parents who may be extremely successful in school. They identified the need for support for parents in understanding the Canadian high school and post-secondary system, flexible programs to learn

the language, and training programs to help with accreditation of foreign-trained professionals. Key informants identified the need to build partnerships with agencies, organizations, and schools who have already developed relationships with newcomer communities. They also suggested that, in developing any service or program, the ability to respond to a wide range of cultural issues would be crucial for success.

Aboriginal Issues

In all three neighbourhoods, key informants identified a theme around people with Aboriginal heritage. This includes a legacy of residential schools (negative cultural experiences with schools and education), the need to incorporate Aboriginal culture into curriculum and any training opportunities, and looking at alternative ways to engage Aboriginal students (examples given included the NYA:WEH program in high schools and Project Pathfinder – a summer camp run by Mohawk College).

Employment Services, Ontario Works, and Ontario Disability Support Programme

There was a group of ideas around Employment Services, OW, and ODSP. These focused on ensuring that supports, employment programs, and financial assistance is available through these agencies. Employment Ontario services have access to provincial training programs and financial assistance (Second Career, Youth Employment Fund, and others). As well, they provide assessment and support for clients, and work with employers to find and create employment opportunities. Ontario Works has 3,500 people on its employable caseload and is able to pay for training programs like dual credit, college, and alternative education programs. ODSP have employment programs for their clients. Given the high rates of people who are on OW, ODSP, or not employed, key informants suggested that these training resources could provide key incentives and support in the neighbourhoods.

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5.2

Exploring the Concept of a Learning Annex

Key informants were asked to consider how a Learning Annex might respond to some of the issues and challenges raised above. These responses are presented below in several sections: 1) What could a Learning Annex do? 2) Principles to guide a Learning Annex, and 3) Ways to deliver a Learning Annex (space and incentive considerations).

What Could a Learning Annex do?

1. Raise aspirations around education and skills training (14). Key informants felt that a Learning Annex could promote what was available at the post-secondary and skills training level. This included strategies that may encourage people (including whole families) to consider taking part in education and skills training. This idea was related to the idea that many people are not actively considering education or re-training options.
2. Find creative ways to engage neighbourhoods around education and training options (12). Key informants felt that a Learning Annex should offer short, introductory, hands on courses on a wide range of topics that could serve as confidence builders for participants. A Learning Annex could also host lectures, seminars, bridging programs, and partner with community organizations and schools to expand programs.
3. Engage people where they already are (10). Key informants thought that a potential strength to a Learning Annex would be the ability to engage residents where they already are – in community centres, schools, and other organizations. Key informants felt strongly there should be a mobile component to a Learning Annex.
4. Build relationships with employers (8). Key informants reported that a Learning Annex could build and strengthen relationships with local employers in terms of developing skill training that would make residents more competitive in job searches, posting job opportunities locally, and providing information about what careers in certain fields include.
5. Offer expertise, advocacy and support around continuing education and upgrading (school boards), post-secondary advice, employment support and advice, newcomer specific programming, and programs available through Ontario Works and ODSP (8). There was support among most key informants for developing a co-operative model that included a wide variety of services that could be offered depending on the neighbourhood needs.
6. There were a number of specific suggestions that a Learning Annex could offer: technology training (including digital, audio-visual and arts based), mentorship opportunities, programs (not information sessions) on different careers, College 101, Intro to Education, WHMIS training, specific trades training (forklift training, for example, should be developed with employers), customer service certificate training, hands on activities, links to athletic programming, trips to college and university campuses, family literacy sessions, academic upgrading, and language training.

Principles to Guide a Learning Annex

- **Relationships.** The most frequent responses were that a Learning Annex should use relationships to leverage services and clients, and not try create everything from scratch. A Learning Annex could recruit “graduates” from other community programs.
- **Partnerships.** The second most frequent response was that a Learning Annex should bring together existing services, organizations, and resources and use partnerships to deliver innovative services. Key informants thought that many of these services already exist in the community and could be redesigned or adjusted for delivery in the neighbourhoods.
- **Flexibility.** Key informants felt that flexibility in program design, admission criteria (rolling), in curriculum, activities, and programming. Informants felt a Learning Annex and its staff would need to be nimble and able to adjust to changing conditions and opportunities in neighbourhoods.
- **Welcoming.** This principle was identified especially with regard to cultural sensitivity and physical accessibility. Key informants said that people were more likely to get involved if their first impressions were positive.
- **Long Term Commitment and Patience.** There was a near consensus among key informants that developing a Learning Annex was a major undertaking and would take time and patience to build. They strongly discouraged taking a short-term approach to a Learning Annex.
- **Ownership by Neighbourhoods.** Key informants felt strongly that the neighbourhoods needed to be invested in a Learning Annex and that uptake of its programs would likely rely on how much ownership neighbourhood residents perceived they had.

Ways to Deliver a Learning Annex (Space and Incentive Considerations)

As stated above, most key informants felt that a mobile component of the Learning Annex was essential. The ability to engage residents where they are, be that in community centres, organizations, or schools, should be a priority. Key informants felt that as people gained experience and confidence they could move on to other locations.

Key informants were divided about whether there needed to be a new physical space to house a Learning Annex to complement the mobile services. There was interest by some in a central downtown space that would have access to computer and a classroom (or two) to provide visibility and a “home base” for people to access Learning Annex. Key informants who favored this approach expressed that the ability to have staff from different services in one location would be very helpful to neighbourhood residents, and would encourage the integration of services and programs offered.

Some key informants felt that relying on a "storefront" or physical space model to generate interest and encourage neighbourhood residents to come to a new location to get services would be challenging. This was particularly true for the Beasley and Keith neighbourhoods where the community centres are very visible and well used. Several key informants said that they would be able to help staff a mobile team, but that creating "another" office location may not be the best use of resources.

Among the key informants there was a fair amount of discussion about incentives that could be used to encourage people to get involved in the Learning Annex. Some of the ideas mentioned include: on-site child care, access to technology, financial incentives, links to actual employment, nice physical location, or certificates of completion.

Finally, key informants encouraged the project to keep a narrow focus, to start small, and to build success along the way. In the words of one key informant, "Think 40, not 400, and build it up over time". The most common suggestion for a target population was people 18-30, with some re-training opportunities, parental involvement, and newcomers. Several key informants noted a time in people's twenties when they become disillusioned with low-skill, low paid work, and may be looking to upgrade their skill level.





Results – Neighbourhood Resident Interviews

For this project, 58 residents from the Keith, Jamesville, and Beasley neighbourhoods were interviewed either individually or in small groups. The purpose of these interviews was to better understand their experiences with challenges to high school completion, barriers to post-secondary programs or skill training programs. A second component of the interviews explored the concept of a Learning Annex. The questions used to guide the interviews are included in Appendix D.

The sample of 58 was divided approximately in half between youth (age under 21, n=31) and adults (ages 21-57, n=27). The vast majority of interviewees lived in the Keith, Jamesville, or Beasley neighbourhoods. There were three people included in the sample who lived outside the neighbourhoods, but regularly used services within them. Adults were recruited through services in the neighbourhoods: the Eva Rothwell Community Centre, the Wesley Early Years Centres on Queen St North and Beasley Community Centre, and the Welcome Inn. To be interviewed, adults had to be experiencing unemployment, underemployment, or other labour market challenges. Youth were recruited through agencies including NGEN, Pathways to Education, the YMCA's Newcomer Youth Centre, Grace Haven, the Eva Rothwell Community Centre, and through the Youth Outreach Worker program, and were experiencing some risk factors for high school completion. Each participant was given a \$5 coffee voucher following the interview.

The following table shows the diverse range of educational experiences and cultural backgrounds.

TABLE 7: NEIGHBOURHOOD RESIDENTS DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

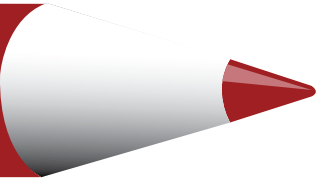
	GENDER		HIGHEST EDUCATION LEVEL				VISIBLE MINORITY	ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER	ABORIGINAL HERITAGE
	M	F	No High School Completed	OSSD or GED	Some Post Secondary	Some University			
Youth	17	14	31	--	--	--	14	6	4
Adults	5	22	6	2	14	5	4	3	3

There are several items to note in the above table. First, the adult sample was heavily skewed in terms of gender. This is likely due to the sampling method of recruiting through agencies, particularly Early Years Centres, where women are more frequent attenders. Second, none of the youth had completed high school, however all but one were currently enrolled in high school, and several had been accepted to post-secondary programs in the fall. Finally, among adults, many had started post-secondary or skill training programs (e.g. started a dental assistant program at a private career college). In all cases, these programs had not led to employment in that field. This finding is discussed in more detail below.

The results from the interviews have been grouped into themes and divided into youth responses and adult responses. They are presented below in Section 6.1: Barriers, Challenges, and Solutions and Section 6.2: Exploring the Concept of a Learning Annex.



6.1



Barriers, Challenges and Solutions

Barriers to High School Completion – Youth

1. **School experiences are negative (15).** This theme included experiences of bullying, problems with peer relationships, disagreements with teachers, and experiences of discrimination. Most times these concerns were school-specific, and several youth had re-engaged in different schools successfully. This theme also includes several youths' comments of being "bored" and a desire to do more "hands on" learning.
2. **Language (5).** For any newcomer youth for whom English was a second language, language was the primary barrier identified to completing high school. Youth said that language barriers made it difficult to understand the curriculum as well as relate to peers. Each of these students was very interested in completing high school and learning English.
3. **Substance abuse and drugs (5).** Youth identified that drug use created problems for completing high school for either themselves or their friends. They pointed to drug use leading to missing classes and falling behind in classes or to involvement in the criminal justice system.
4. **Pregnancy/child-care (4).** All of the youth that we spoke to at Grace Haven were young parents, and they reported that pregnancy was the reason they stopped going to high school. They were all currently enrolled in alternative high school at Grace Haven.
5. **Other barriers identified included:** self-identified learning disabilities, family breakdown, transportation (involving child care/strollers on buses), having to work to support oneself, and anxiety or mental health issues.

Barriers to High School Completion – Adults

1. **Pregnancy and Child Care (9).** The most frequently identified reason for not completing high school was pregnancy during high school. Most women reported that they had left school when they became pregnant and not had an opportunity to return because of child care responsibilities.
2. **Major family event or breakdown (9).** This theme included deaths in the family (parent or sibling), abuse, or getting "kicked out" of the family home. Adults who talked about these experiences reported that these events were traumatic, and made continuing in school impossible.
3. **Substance abuse and drug use (4).** Similar to the youth interviews, there was a theme among adults that involvement in substance abuse created problems for completing high school.
4. **Other barriers identified:** not enjoying school, self-identified learning disability, and having to work to support oneself/immediate needs.

What is working well?

High School Completion – Youth and Adults

1. **Involvement in Pathways to Education (11).** Youth who were involved in Pathways in these neighbourhoods were highly supportive of the tutoring, mentorship, and financial incentives of the program, and reported that program was helping them complete high school. There was only one student (currently enrolled in an alternative school program) who reported that Pathways “hadn’t really worked” for her.
2. **Involvement in sports (9).** Another common theme was that involvement in sports helped some youth (particularly, but not exclusively, boys) stay involved in school. When asked how sports helped with high school completion, one student reported “it means you can’t skip classes”. In several cases, youth said sports was the main reason they stayed in school.
3. **Parental involvement and expectations (8).** Youth reported that parental expectations were an important factor in determining if they completed school. Most youth reported that their parents required them to stay in school (and for many, attend post-secondary school as well).
4. **Alternative programs, re-entry, and adult learning opportunities (8).** There was a common theme around alternative schools providing a place where youth could succeed when they had not done well in mainstream schools. Youth reported the more flexible format, co-op placements, quiet and smaller classrooms, as well as on-site child care were helpful in re-engaging them in high school completion. Several adults also reported that returning to get a high school diploma in an adult learning environment had been a positive experience.

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Barriers and Challenges to Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training – Youth

Youth were asked if they were interested in post-secondary and/or skill training programs. Of the 31 youth who were interviewed, 25 reported they wanted some post-secondary training while 6 said that getting their high school diploma was as far as they wanted to go (“for now”, some said).

1. **Financial Issues and Concerns (22).** The most frequent barrier identified to post-secondary education and skill training was financial concerns. This included not being able to afford tuition, not wanting to take out loans for school, and parents not being able to help with the costs of post-secondary programs. This theme also included comments from youth that they were uncertain how to get information about financial aid that might be available.
2. **Needing more information/assistance/guidance (17).** In spite of vast majority of youth stating they wanted to attend post-secondary programs, most youth did not know what was available in terms of post-secondary or skill training programs. They also reported not knowing where to access this information and that it would be helpful to have someone “mentor” them along the process.

3. **Language (6).** For youth who were English language learners, language, particularly in the field of study, was viewed as a major barrier. There were several youth who were interested in post-secondary programs in highly specialized fields (e.g. biotechnology) and were concerned they would not be able to complete the programs or meet the admission requirements because of language difficulties. Interestingly, all of these English language learners were very committed to attending either college or university.

Barriers and Challenges to Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training – Adults

Adults were asked if they were interested in attending post-secondary or skills training programs. Of the 27 adults who were interviewed, 19 had already participated in some kind of post-secondary program. This ranged from beginning a class at a private career college, to completing a college degree, to five adults who had completed some university. Of the 19, all were having continued difficulty in the labour market. The five adults with university experience were all foreign-trained professionals whose credentials were not recognized in Canada, and they were all seeking out additional training opportunities. Of the 8 adults who had not taken part in any post-secondary training, 5 said they were interested in doing more training or completing their high school diploma.

1. **Financial Issues and Concerns (20).** Similar to youth, the most common barrier identified by adults were financial considerations. This theme included the ability to pay tuition or programs costs as well as the inability to take time off work to attend school or training. There were several adults with existing OSAP loans and that was a barrier to additional training.
2. **Child care (13).** A second theme revolved around child care. Many adults we spoke to said they would be interested in skill development or post-secondary attendance, but that child care responsibilities did not allow the time to take part in such programs. There were several mothers who were interviewed who did say that their children had recently become school age, and they had increased time for more training.
3. **No links to employment (8).** Adults reported dissatisfaction with some of the post-secondary programs they had completed (e.g. architectural technician, computerized accounting) because they had not led to employment. Interviewees indicated that they wanted any training programs to be linked to actual employment opportunities.
4. **Not sure where to start (7).** There was an additional theme among adults that, while they wanted to pursue more training, they did not know where to start. Generally, they were unsure about who to get information from regarding available programs, upgrading requirements and opportunities, and where financial assistance may come from.

What is working well? Post-secondary and Skill-Training Programs

Youth repeatedly mentioned successful interactions with guidance counselors and teachers regarding post-secondary options. Additionally, the grade 10 Careers class helped many understand possible fields of interest.

1. There were four adults who were currently working with Employment Services – three foreign trained professionals and one woman who had been out of the labour force for over 10 years before returning to get her high school diploma and look for employment. Two of three foreign trained professionals were happy with the language training and employment help they were receiving. One of the three was unable to find work in her field (pharmacology). The woman who was receiving re-training in social service work through Employment Services was extremely positive about her experience.
2. Respondents were divided on their experience with Ontario Works. Some people reported they were extremely pleased and their case workers had been extremely helpful and encouraging around skill training, others indicated that they had negative relationships with their case managers.
3. Finally, some residents had participated in adult learning - St. Charles, Red Hill, or King William Learning Centre. These experiences were almost entirely positive, with specific feedback around the flexibility of the curriculum and being surrounded by adult learners. The only negative feedback was that programs were far away (especially from the Keith neighbourhood).

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What could be done better? Post-Secondary and Skill-Training Programs

1. **Increased financial assistance (18).** Not surprisingly, the most common solution identified was additional help financially. This theme included accessing bursaries and scholarships, as well as opportunities to work and attend school.
2. **Mentorship/Navigation/Case Management (15).** One solution people talked about was having support people to assist with accessing programs and training. This included youth talking about guidance counselors and teachers who had encouraged them to attend post-secondary programs, as well as suggestions around the need for support systems.
3. **Promoting Available Opportunities (8).** A common theme among participants was a lack of knowledge about what was available in both post-secondary and skill training programs. Suggestions included trips to campuses and facilities, reports of positive experiences with open houses to generate interest, and better promotion of available programs.
4. **E-learning and blended learning opportunities (7).** There were several requests for increased e-learning and blended learning opportunities. Often, these were mothers with child care responsibilities who would be unable to attend a typical classroom setting. When asked if they would attend a program if child-care were provided, most said they would.

Additional Results from the Resident Interviews

Neighbourhood boundaries are very clear in the Keith neighbourhood, but more porous in Jamesville and Beasley.

Keith residents strongly identified with their neighbourhood and the services within it, especially the Eva Rothwell Centre. Many residents spoke of their reluctance to leave the neighbourhood to access other programs and services. This was in stark contrast to Beasley and Jamesville residents interviewed, who were unlikely to associate themselves with a particular neighbourhood or to distinguish between the two neighbourhoods. Residents of Jamesville were more likely to consider themselves from either the North End or downtown, and Beasley residents primarily considered themselves from downtown Hamilton.

Most people interviewed use the Internet, but consistent access can be difficult.

Residents were asked if they use the Internet, if they have the Internet at home, and if they use a smart phone. Of the 31 youth, only 3 said they do not use the Internet. Twenty-four (24) reported having the Internet at home, and eight (8) that they use computers at a library or organization. Twenty-one (21) had smart phones, and all had data plans. Of the 27 adults, 18 had Internet access at home, 9 said they use the library or other organizations, only one person said they do not use the internet at all. Of the adults, 19 had smartphones, but only 11 currently had data plans. There were numerous comments about how expensive it was to have a smart phone and Internet access.





Exploring the Concept of a Learning Annex

Following the discussion of barriers, challenges, and solutions around further education and training, the interviewer gave a brief description of the concept of a Learning Annex. Residents were asked if they thought they might use a Learning Annex, what kinds of services would make it especially attractive, and what might keep them from using it.

Overall, nearly 75% (43/58) of people interviewed thought a Learning Annex was a good idea, and that they might be interested in using it. Several people remarked that they had family members or friends who would use it. A total of 12 people (20%) said they were unlikely to use a Learning Annex – the most common reason given was they already knew how to access programs they were interested in, or were happy with training/employment advice they were involved in. There were 4 people (7%) who were unsure. The percentages were approximately the same for both youth and adults.

Responses around what kinds of opportunities a Learning Annex might offer were different for youth and adults, and are reported separately below:


What might a Learning Annex offer? – Youth

1. **Opportunities based on athletics (14).** Many youth were interested in sports and athletic opportunities – especially related to Mohawk and McMaster. Specific sports that were identified were basketball, soccer, football, and hockey. Many youth expressed interest in seeing and using athletic facilities on campuses, and meeting student athletes.
2. **Services where youth already are (12).** Youth felt strongly about a mobile component to a Learning Annex. It was common for youth to express they did not like to go to new services or organizations where they had not been. They also wanted Annex services to be close by and accessible. This was especially true for youth in the Keith neighbourhood, who reported they were unlikely to attend services that were far away.
3. **Someone to plan and help navigate options (9).** Students reported that understanding the different types of programs, admission requirements, and financial aid was very complex. There were several people interviewed who were encouraged to attend McMaster, but did not know how to access enough financial assistance. Additionally, youth spoke highly of Mohawk's Access counselors, Pathways, and teachers and guidance counselors, and hoped for similar kinds of help.
4. **Trips to campus and specific examples of programs that are available (9).** Many youth hoped for additional information about what kinds of programs were available, and found that orientation sessions and trips to campus were highly effective ways to get that information.

5. **Incentives (9).** Youth said they were much more likely to access a Learning Annex if there were incentives, specifically food, technology, or money. There were several comments about programs like Threshold School of Building where participants are paid while they are receiving training. People also said that access to advanced technology (Photoshop, audio-visual equipment) would be an incentive.
6. **Other suggestions included:** tutoring (6), whole family involvement (6), hands-on learning opportunities (5) and flexible learning/upgrading (5).

Youth also were asked what kinds of subjects they were interested in receiving training in. They responded with the following answers: early childhood education, social service worker, kinesiology, nursing, child and youth work, trades apprenticeship, sound engineer, photography, electrician, skilled trades for women, physiotherapy, massage therapy, welding, mechanic, insurance, music, broadcasting and mechanical engineering.

What might a Learning Annex offer? – Adults

- 
1. **Training with direct links to employment (10).** The most frequent theme identified by adults was that any training programs should involve employers and/or be directly linked to available jobs.
 2. **Information/support around how to get started (10).** A second theme was that people have a hard time getting information about how to get started on upgrading or skill training. This includes information about the types of programs available, but also how to make arrangements to attend and receive financial assistance if necessary.
 3. **On-site child care or child-minding (8).** Residents often stated that child care was a huge barrier to further education/training and that if a service offered child care they were much more likely to use it. In fact, some people said offering child care was a strong incentive to get involved.
 4. **On-line and blended learning opportunities (7).** Residents reported they were interested in on-line learning, or on-line learning with supports. Often, this was because they felt they had very little time (often because of child care), and may be able to complete training from home.
 5. **Financial incentives (6).** Some respondents said they would be more likely to pursue training opportunities that offered some kind financial incentive (paid co-op position or work while training). They were less likely to pay out of pocket for training opportunities.
 6. **Accessible location (6).** Respondents also suggested that a Learning Annex be offered in an accessible location and/or where people already use services (Keith residents were especially strong on this point). Considerations that residents identified were: free parking area, bus access, and help with transportation costs.

7. **Foreign-trained professional training (5).** There was also a group of suggestions around offering specific training for foreign trained professionals. Specific suggestions included licensing exam preparation courses, or linkage programs to employers.

Adults were asked about what subjects or skills they might be interested in. There was a wide range of responses, including personal support worker, volunteer management, salon, medical sciences, legal administration, nursing, social service worker, community service worker, computer programming, pharmacy assistant, dental assistant, food services, graphic design, skilled trades for women (construction, drywall), forklift training, welding, and medical office administration.



Results – Survey and Interviews with Employers

In order to explore the current skills training, education requirements, and hiring practices of employers in the lower Hamilton area, two methods were used to gather information. Workforce Planning Hamilton's *Hire Learning* survey was distributed Hamilton-wide, and employers that were in the priority neighbourhoods' postal codes were analyzed separately to create a sample of local employers. There were 41 employers in this sample. (There were 169 employers who responded to the *Hire Learning* survey city-wide). These employers were from a variety of sectors, with the exception of the manufacturing and public administration sector⁴⁶, and a variety of employee sizes.

The second method to engage employers was a phone or in-person interview that targeted employers located in the Keith, Jamesville, or Beasley neighbourhoods who were selected from a range of sectors and who had more than 20 employees. In the phone interview, employers were asked a range of questions about educational and skill requirements of employees, recruiting strategies, and outlook for growth. The concept of a Learning Annex was also explored along with the potential for employer involvement. There were 24 employers who participated in the phone interview⁴⁷. There were a number of sectors represented including manufacturing (5), Construction (5), Business Services (5), Health Care and Social Services (4), Finance and Insurance (3), Transportation and Warehousing (1), and Retail (1).

The results of the survey and phone interview are presented separately in the sections below. Questions for the phone interview are included as Appendix E.

Hire Learning Survey Results – LMAP Sample

There are positions available for all educational backgrounds; however, post-secondary training does provide more opportunities.

Organizations were most likely to report college education as the requirement for either some or many of their positions

- 68% of respondents had either some or many of their positions needing college credentials
- Organizations were likely to have either very few high-school level positions or have the majority of their positions at that education level
- Many employers further stated they are looking for a combination of practical experience and training

⁴⁶ There were no employers who identified as in the manufacturing or public administration sectors. For that reason, the phone interview targeted employers in those sectors and had a good response.

⁴⁷ There was some overlap between participants of the *Hire Learning* survey and the phone interview (meaning some organizations filled out the survey and participated in the phone interview). There were at least 48 unique organizations who participated in at least one.

LMAP employers surveyed in the Hire Learning survey have a generally positive employment outlook.

- Skilled trades and apprentices, technicians, and IT professionals were among the commonly cited occupations in demand.
- 56% of LMAP employers indicated they were currently growing compared to 44% of Hamilton-wide employers
- Only 12% of LMAP employers indicated they were currently declining, similar to Hamilton-wide 11%
- 70% of LMAP respondents said they were likely to hire at least one new employee in the next year
- Employers reported that Professionals, and Administrative and Clerical Workers were the occupations most likely to grow in the coming year.

The vast majority of LMAP employers find recruiting a difficult issue.

- 83% of employers indicated recruitment is somewhat or very challenging.
- The most common reasons recruitment is a difficult issue are:
 - Too many unqualified applicants
 - Too few qualified applicants
 - Compensation levels to attract qualified applicants.

TABLE 8: TOP 5 MOST COMMON RECRUITMENT METHODS – LMAP EMPLOYERS

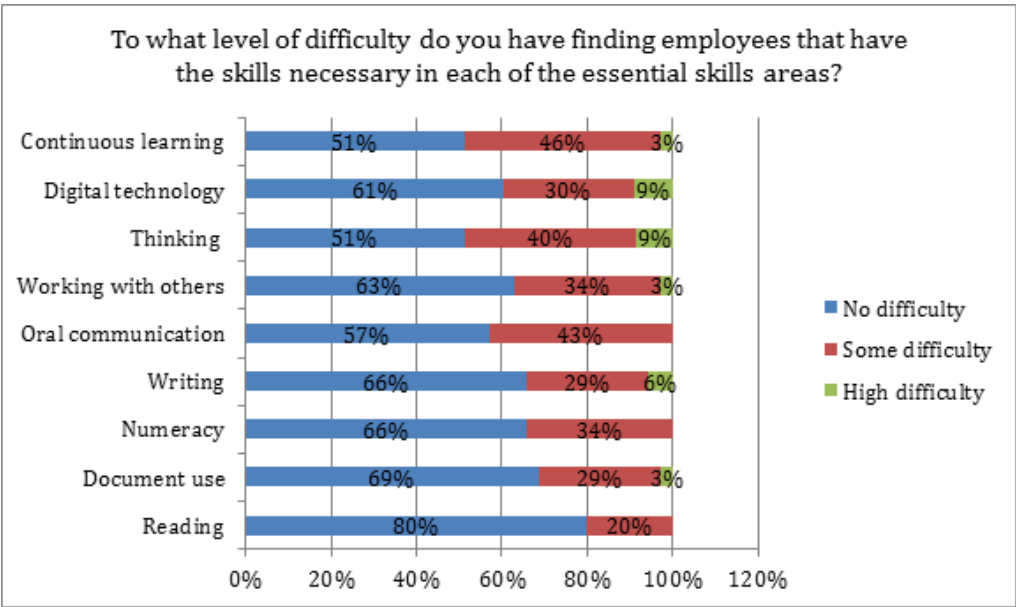
Organization's website	66%
Online job listing (e.g. Indeed, Workopolis)	63%
Word of Mouth/Employee Networks	63%
Using co-op student or interns	49%
College/university job boards ⁴⁸	49%

Continuous learning and thinking were the essential skills LMAP employers had the most difficulty finding in employees.

- Note: Different organizations require different levels of complexity for each of the essential skills
- Reading was the essential skill that employers had the least amount of difficulty finding in employees

⁴⁸ Note: the high number of respondents who indicated using co-op students and college/university job boards could have been influenced by the fact that Mohawk and McMaseter were both partners on the survey and sent it out through their networks.

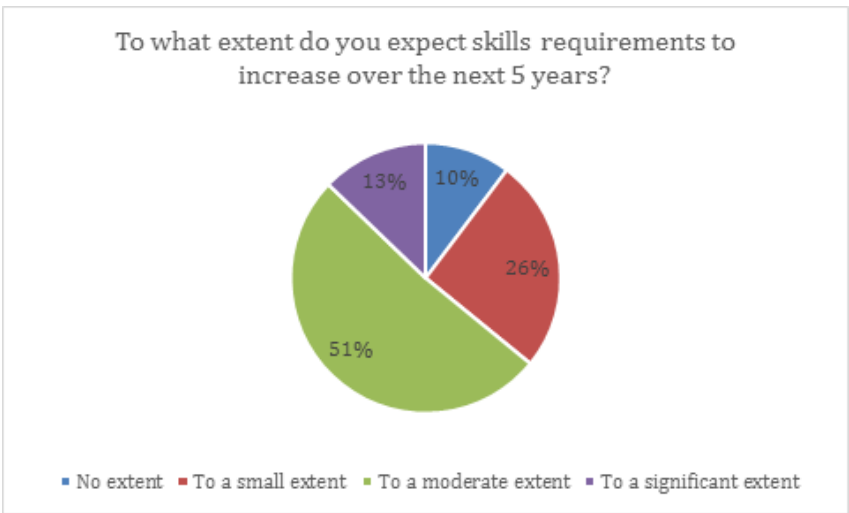
Table 9: Difficulty Finding Essential Skills, Hamilton Employers, 2014



Almost 2/3rd of LMAP employers expect skill requirements to increase moderately or to a significant extent in the next 5 years.

- When asked what skills in particular employers expect will increase, the most common themes were digital literacy and soft skills (including communication, problem solving and basic common sense).

TABLE 10: SKILL REQUIREMENT EXPECTATIONS, HAMILTON EMPLOYERS, 2014



Results from the Employer Interviews

The vast majority of employers interviewed require at least a high school diploma when looking for new employees.

Of the 24 employers who were interviewed, 19 required at least a high school diploma even for the entry-level positions. Of the remaining five organizations, three said they didn't absolutely require a high school diploma, but it would be very helpful in getting hired. The remaining two organizations said they would provide training as needed to candidates who were interested and had good teamwork skills and were dependable.

Post-secondary education offers a strong advantage for job-seekers among these employers.

Of the employers who were interviewed, 17 out of 24 said that a post-secondary education was either required or would be very helpful in getting hired or being promoted into senior positions into the company. Particular college programs that were mentioned include: Executive Office Training, Early Childhood Education, Child and Youth Worker, Social Service Worker, Insurance, Business, Marketing, Sales, Advertising, Graphic Design, Computer Science, and any skilled trades. University programs that were desirable included Business, Engineering, and Human Resources.

Employers are looking for applicants with strong "soft skills".

One of the most common themes (14) that employers mentioned in the interviews was their desire to find applicants with good interpersonal skills, who are motivated and possess a strong work ethic. Especially in the case of employers who are looking for less skilled workers, interpersonal skills and teamwork ability play a very strong role in the ability to get hired. Several employers reported they are happy to train workers that demonstrate these basic skills even if they do not always have the full degree or diploma.

Most employers reported that they have very little trouble attracting entry-level applicants generally, but do have more trouble with specialized positions.

Several employers talked about "lines across the street" or "hundreds of applications" if they post a position publicly. In order to compensate for the large demand, some will rely on personnel companies or employment agencies to sort through potential applicants. In these cases, it is rare for people without the educational qualifications for the job to get interviews. Multiple employers also mentioned that they did have difficulty filling positions in the skilled trades (including advanced degrees like engineering). There were also multiple human service organizations who had current openings for people with human service related diplomas or training. Additional factors employers mentioned as requirements for hiring included: prior experience, bondable/police record check, digital literacy, and communication/clear language.

Employers reported that they had more difficulty filling positions in the skilled trades, particularly in the manufacturing and construction sectors.

Specific trades that were mentioned included welders, industrial mechanics, millwrights, electricians, pipefitters, plumbers, and sheet metal workers. Employers who were unionized accessed employees through union hiring halls, while non-union workplaces relied on advertising in a variety of places. While the demand for the skilled trades appears high, employers also reported it is not easy for employees to begin an apprenticeship into the skilled trades, due to a number of factors including a limited number of apprenticeship positions and skilled tradespersons willing to take on apprenticeship positions.

A majority of employers advised that the best way for neighbourhood residents to get hired in their workplace is to “go back to school and get the required diploma or degree”.

Over half the employers (15/24) reported the strong demand for entry level workers (many applications) as well as their own hiring policies (requirements of certain education levels) make it much more likely that applicants with the educational prerequisites will be hired. There were additional suggestions for shorter periods of training that would set an applicant apart from the field, most in the manufacturing, industrial, and transportation sector. Specific suggestions: fork lift, skid steer, lift truck, AZ driving, fall safety, WHMIS, tire installation, food service training, propane handling training, and human resources.

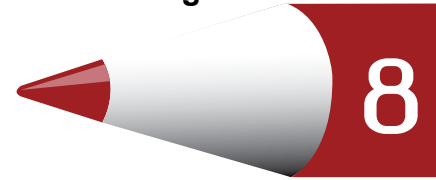
Most employers were interested in the development of a Learning Annex, but not sure how to get involved.

Responses to questions about a Learning Annex are divided into three categories: 1) engaged and interested employers, 2) interested and not engaged, and 3) not interested. Overall, employers were looking for defined opportunities to get involved, and while, in most cases, provided some suggestions, a prescribed menu of different ways to get involved may have been helpful.

There were six employers (25%) that were engaged and interested in the development of a Learning Annex. These employers were already aware of, or involved in, the Neighbourhood Action Strategy and had ideas about how they might contribute to a Learning Annex. Ideas included: recruiting or posting job openings in the neighbourhood hubs, offering mentoring around specific occupations, or offering information or training on specific occupations.

There were 16 employers (67%) who were interested in becoming more involved, but not yet engaged. These employers had ideas similar to the already engaged employers like information sessions, participation in job fairs, posting job openings, as well as considering corporate sponsorship. With this group of employers, there would need to be additional relationship building to enable their participation.

A small minority of employers (2) were not interested in obtaining more information or being involved. These employers did not believe that participation in a Learning Annex development would be beneficial to them.



Analysis and Recommendations

This final section brings together the major findings of the report and identifies strategies to move these findings ahead. To develop the major findings, the Steering Committee reviewed the results of prior sections, and prioritized the themes for the next phases of action.

This section is presented in three parts: first, the major barriers to high school completion, post-secondary attendance, and skills training; second, the perspective of neighbourhood employers in the current labour market; and finally, exploring the concept of a Learning Annex with a set of recommendations for continued development in the Jamesville, Keith, and Beasley neighbourhoods.

Barriers and Solutions to High School Completion, Post-Secondary Attendance, and Skills Training

Across all key informants (service providers and educators) and neighbourhood residents, the most common barriers to high school completion were 1) major family events or breakdown, 2) school experiences were negative, 3) addictions/substance abuse, 4) child-care or teen pregnancy, and 5) language. There was significant variation of the barriers by sub-population. For example, among women, child-care and teen pregnancy was by far the most common barrier. For English Language learners, language was the most common barrier.

Key informants and neighbourhood residents both expressed that the current Student Success Strategies are improving engagement and completion rates of high school. This perception was supported by rising graduation rates, particularly the 25-34 age range in the Jamesville, Beasley and Keith neighbourhoods. A second solution for improving graduation rates was the success of afterschool mentorship and tutoring programs – particularly with financial incentives. Students who were involved with these programs strongly identified them as motivational and helpful to keep them engaged in school. The other most common solutions identified included using sports to keep youth engaged, high parental expectations, and early intervention (grade school). These solutions align with the protective factors discussed in the Best Practice section.

The barriers to post-secondary education and skills training were very similar, and are discussed together. Financial barriers were overwhelmingly identified as the largest barrier to post-secondary education. The second largest barrier identified to both post-secondary and skill training programs was a lack of “educational readiness”. This included a lack of knowledge about potential programs, requiring assistance to navigate the process to gain entry, and not being interested in more training or education. For some residents, this was due to negative experiences or lack of success in school, or not obtaining employment following previous training. Child-care was the third most common barrier identified among key informants and neighbourhood residents. For parents with young children, the responsibilities of child-care made consideration of training or education very difficult. There was interest, though, by many of the women, if affordable child-care could be arranged. Finally, a fourth barrier was language and settlement issues. This included the need to have relatively strong English skills to gain admittance to post-secondary

education, and some skill training programs. It also included the difficulties in navigating the Canadian and Ontario post-secondary and skill training landscape. Finally, mental health issues, particularly anxiety and/or depression, were a commonly identified barrier to post-secondary or skills training programs.

There were a range of solutions identified by key informants and neighbourhood residents that fit well with the literature review. The most common suggestion for solutions focused on financial assistance – either by lowering the cost of programs, or by introducing paid co-op or training positions. The second most common solution was to offer mentorship/navigation assistance to people who were interested in pursuing more training. People suggested this assistance could focus on what different programs are available as well as what support options might be available. A third solution focused on the “educational readiness” and “negative school experiences” barriers by suggesting creative and innovative strategies to engage people in education and training opportunities where they would experience success and, perhaps, would go on to further training opportunities. Finally, the provision of child-care was a common solution that key informants, the neighbourhood residents, and the literature review identified as essential.

The Current Labour Market and the Perspective of Neighbourhood Employers

One of the assumptions of this research project was that the Canadian and local labour market is shifting toward higher skill requirements. This assumption was borne out in the research with local employers expecting skill requirements to increase over the next five years as well as most employers requiring post-secondary education to gain entry-level positions.

Given the reports of very high supply of applicants for publicly posted, entry-level positions, neighbourhood residents in Keith, Jamesville, and Beasley with lower levels of education and training face substantial challenges breaking into the labour market. Conversely, employers reported that finding qualified applicants was one of their biggest challenges. This observation led many employers to give the suggestion that getting the proper training, degree, diploma, or certificate would be a substantial advantage in the competitive job market.

There were several additional themes from the interviews with employers. For many employers, in addition to meeting the educational or training qualifications of the job, applicants needed “soft skills” – dependability, a strong work ethic, and the ability to work with a team. Occasionally, particularly for the smaller employers, a lack of educational requirements could be overlooked for applicants with excellent soft skills. Additionally, employers did report they had trouble finding some skilled positions: skilled trades, IT and computer skills, engineering, and business.

Finally, most employers were interested in becoming more involved in the Jamesville, Beasley, and Keith neighbourhoods, but were unsure how to get involved. There was a wide variation in time, ability, and resources that employers could commit to the initiative, and some potential options to engage employers are discussed below.

Exploring the Concept of a Learning Annex

Overall, the Steering Committee (Appendix A) and Neighbourhood Planning Teams felt this research found very strong support and evidence for further development of training, skill building, and educational resources in the Keith, Jamesville, and Beasley neighbourhoods. They suggested the priorities should be: 1) increased resources and support around navigation of education and training pathways, 2) increased activities to raise aspirations and create engagement around training and education, 3) engaging employers in the overall process, 4) and reducing barriers and creating incentives to training and education programs. To accomplish these priorities, the Steering Committee supported the development of a Phase 2 of the current project that would operationalize and develop an implementation plan for a Hamilton Learning Annex team that would undertake action to address the priorities.

There were additional findings from the research that are somewhat separate from a Phase 2 of the Labour Market Action Planning project. These actions focus on community partnerships and could be targeted for implementation or expansion earlier than the completion of Phase 2.

The Steering Committee felt that successful implementation of this initiative will require a strong commitment of community agencies, schools, funders, institutions, and neighbourhood planning teams. There was strong consensus across key informants that the project will require continued coordination and strong links to the neighbourhood hubs as it develops.

Recommendation #1:

The Steering Committee and neighbourhood hubs should pursue resources for a Project Manager to coordinate the implementation and operationalization of a Learning Annex team.

Recommendation #2:

The Jamesville, Keith, and Beasley Neighbourhood Planning Teams should create an Education and Training sub-committee who will work with the Project Manager to develop and guide this initiative into Phase 2⁴⁹.

From the key informants and interviews with neighbourhood residents, there was strong evidence for assistance ("navigation") for neighbourhood residents to explore potential employment or education pathways and how to achieve these pathways, including a discussion of financial implications. From the interviews as well as the Best Practice and Learning Annex Reviews, it was also clear there would need to be a mobile outreach component to any Annex, as residents would be more likely to attend where they were comfortable and already had relationships. Key informants also suggested a need to offer case support and advocacy to help troubleshoot when working with different systems. Reviews of other successful models demonstrated a need to be creative around financial incentives (scholarship, paid training sessions, co-op credit programs, bursaries, grants) as well as reducing other barriers like child-care and transportation.

⁴⁹ During the development of this report, the Gibson Landsdale (GALA) Neighbourhood Planning Team identified Education and Training as a neighbourhood priority. The next phases of this project may want to consider including GALA as the issues around education and training are likely to be similar.

Based on the finding that there are complex barriers to participating in education and skills training for many people, and that family education levels are the strongest predictor of post-secondary attendance, a Learning Annex team will have to work creatively with different groups so to engage them in training, education, or a Learning Annex setting. Engagement strategies could include activities with families and children in grade schools, high schools, or in neighbourhood hubs. Currently, a Canada Learning Bond working group has undertaken a pilot project in neighbourhoods to increase the uptake of the Canada Learning Bond among lower income families. Evaluation of a Toronto pilot showed that educational savings increased a student's likelihood of high school completion. Partnering with this type of initiative may build engagement and increase awareness of a Learning Annex. Additional examples from other communities include: a career cruiser, trips to campuses, businesses, using recreation and athletics to generate interest, public lectures, as well as pre-employment and bridge programs, including language training. Many of these programs are intended to help people to have successful experiences before moving on to more in-depth training or employment.

Another priority area for this initiative was ensuring that training and education opportunities were strongly linked to current employment opportunities and the local labour market. There was agreement among key informants, employers, and neighbourhood residents that local employers need to be involved in the development of a Learning Annex, and that developing and maintaining relationships with employers will take continued work and emphasis. Suggestions for employer engagement took a range of different forms: specific training programs for specific employment, employment bridge programs, working with employers to hire locally or post openings in neighbourhood hubs, build on or access job developer network, and exploring employer mentors.

When reviewing these priority areas, the Steering Committee felt that an interdisciplinary Learning Annex team built from community agencies and institutions would be able to access a range of training and education resources, as well as begin the implementation of the outreach to neighbourhoods. Such a team will need coordination, leadership, and dedicated resources. To this end, the creation of a position called Education and Training Navigator is suggested.

Recommendation #3:

Identify resources to create an Education and Training Navigator position by the conclusion of Phase 2 who will coordinate the activities of the Learning Annex Team to implement and oversee progress on these recommendations. Given the feedback around making a long-term commitment to this initiative, this position should be created for a 3-5 year term.

Recommendation #4:

Create an interdisciplinary Learning Annex Team through re-alignment of existing resources. Team members should include (at a minimum): City of Hamilton Neighbourhood Action Strategy, Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program, Employment Ontario providers, Settlement Workers, Community Development workers, School Boards, Mohawk College, and McMaster University. This team needs to be able to provide services in different locations across the City.

The Project Manager, and Education and Training Navigator where appropriate, with the Learning Annex Team will:

- a. In Phase 2, develop protocols and partnerships to provide case management and navigation support to neighbourhood residents who are interested in training or post-secondary attendance.
 - Establish guidelines and targets for phasing in case management
 - Promotion of existing programs to encourage take-up in neighbourhoods
 - b. Create innovative and flexible opportunities to engage neighbourhood residents in training and education.
 - Stackable, micro-credentials
 - Links to current employment and labour market needs
 - Soft skill development
 - Ability to target different sub-populations
 - c. Build and strengthen relationships with employers.
 - Develop a menu of different ways employers can be involved: e.g. corporate sponsorship, mentorship, teachers, recruiters, governance, champion, or trainers
 - Develop a strategy for posting and promoting job openings in neighbourhood hubs.
 - Identify several early adopters or Champions to pilot short specific training, or pre-employment bridge training (begin with non-profits or the health care sector)
 - Continue to work with neighbourhood and downtown employers about their labour force needs and experiences.
 - d. Develop and implement a set of strategies designed to raise aspirations around pursuing education and training in partnerships with schools and community organizations.
 - Grade school programs could reach children and parents
 - Campus visits – particularly with post-secondary students involved (especially athletics)
 - Using Individualized E-portfolios as a platform to encourage learning
 - Provide and publicize the many different available training programs.
 - Mentorship with post-secondary students
 - Use technology and innovative programming to engage students.
 - e. Work closely with the Education and Training sub-committees of neighbourhood planning teams and partnering organizations.
 - Develop a communication strategy for each neighbourhood to ensure broad engagement and take-up of opportunities.
 - Publicize training and education opportunities and to offer support around them.
 - Engage residents neighbourhoods around training and education
 - f. Develop an Evaluation Strategy.
-

Given the high amount of feedback regarding real and perceived barriers to training and education, including financial, child-care, transportation, language, and mental health issues, a range of strategies are required to encourage participation from neighbourhood residents.

Recommendation #5:

Explore the creation of an Opportunity Fund that would help make training or education financially manageable, particularly where existing programming does not provide enough assistance. This fund should be fast-tracked, and could be coupled with financial planning assistance.

Recommendation #6:

Develop a child-care strategy that should include conversations with the Early Childhood Education program at Mohawk, the Ontario Early Years Centres, and also the Best Start Network.

Recommendation #7:

Develop an Equity Strategy that will guide the implementation of a Learning Annex. This Strategy should include specific outreach methods for different sub-populations and groups, including but not limited to the different racialized and newcomer communities, Aboriginal people, and single mothers (see the Best Practices – High School Completion for a table identifying issues for particular sub-populations).

Recommendation #8:

Ensure that the Learning Annex Team has expertise in settlement issues, and can offer service to people who do not speak English as a first language.

Recommendation #9:

Assess the need for specialized training for the Learning Annex Team around supporting people with mental health issues and experiences of trauma.

There are several possibilities regarding how a Learning Annex could be delivered, especially in terms of space needs and format. In terms of a geographically located, “bricks and mortar” building, key informants and residents indicated that Keith and Beasley already have very established community centres, and Jamesville is using the library. Given these established centres, respondents were divided on the need for an additional “bricks and mortar” space. There was a broad consensus that the need for a mobile component to start delivering a range of services where people already are gathering (not only community centres, but also community agencies) should be the initial priority.

If a “bricks and mortar” site is developed, there was much discussion around potential child-care models – child “minding” on site, a partnership with the Ontario Early Years Centres, or the Early Childhood Education program at Mohawk – as child-care was reported as one of the major incentives and needs. Additionally, it was suggested that involving post secondary students and their training programs could be valuable. Navigation staff on-site as well as the available incentives and outreach models will be crucial to the success of any model.

The Steering Committee, key informants, or neighbourhood residents did not see virtual learning models, like the Louisiana or Michigan CAN examples, as an immediate priority. However,

this situation should be carefully monitored given the rapid pace of technological change. As opportunities develop, the Learning Annex team could build on current virtual initiatives: ontariocolleges.ca and the local WINHamilton.ca – which serves as a central clearinghouse for skills training and adult education programs in Hamilton. Additionally, the Hamilton Public Library's development of a digital learning lab in the Central Branch may present an opportunity for partnership around technological innovation.

Recommendation #10:

The initial development of the Learning Annex should focus on the mobile component of service delivery. In this capacity, programming can be delivered in partnership with existing community centres and community agencies where potential students and participants are already comfortable. As the Learning Annex gains momentum and experience, additional strategies of program delivery should be explored: including "bricks and mortar" space and virtual/web-based programs.

As mentioned above, there were several findings in this research that do not require the formation of a Learning Annex, but may help to increase high school graduation rates and post-secondary attendance. There were high rates of satisfaction of after school mentorship and scholarship programs like Pathways to Success in encouraging post-secondary attendance, making attendance more feasible financially, and forming strong relationships within schools. However, these programs are not available to all neighbourhood residents given the geographical catchment requirements of the program.

Recommendation #11:

Develop a strategy for the expansion of after-school programs like Pathways to Education or Rogers Raising the Grade to all students in Jamesville and Beasley neighbourhoods⁵⁰.

The Steering Committee, key informants, and Best Practice information indicated that current Student Success Strategy policies in high schools were focusing significant resources on the issue of early leaving, and encouraging high school graduation, so this item was lower on the priority list for Learning Annex activities. There was, however, agreement that the community (schools, neighbourhoods, and community organizations) needs to develop better information about who is leaving and who is at-risk of early leaving so that if students are getting missed, those gaps could be addressed.

Recommendation #12:

Work with school boards and post-secondary institutions to improve the data collection and dissemination about neighbourhood level high-school completion and post-secondary attendance. A better understanding of the number of youth who are at-risk of non-completion (e.g. missing credits in grade 9-10) at the neighbourhood level would be additionally helpful.

⁵⁰ As noted previously, if the Gibson-Landsdale neighbourhoods become involved in this initiative, expansion of these programs should be considered for these neighbourhoods as well.

Conclusion

This research began with a call for improved employment, education, and training strategies that would result in better jobs for residents in the Keith, Jamesville, and Beasley neighbourhoods. The Neighbourhood Planning Teams in these neighbourhoods had recognized the increasing skill requirements of employers across Hamilton, as well as lower than average education and skill attainment for some of its residents. These challenges led to the formation of a multi-stakeholder Steering Committee made up of educators, service providers, funders, and community development workers to work with neighbourhoods to develop strategies and solutions.

The resulting research examined neighbourhood labour market factors and occupations, reviewed best practice literature for high school completion, post-secondary attendance, and participation in skill-training programs. The research also examined the concept of a neighbourhood-based Learning Annex, which began with a review of similar Learning Centres or Learning Annexes in communities across North America. The next phase of the research, intended to ground any developments and strategies in the Hamilton neighbourhood context, involved speaking to over 65 neighbourhood residents, 26 service providers or educators, and obtaining information from 55 employers about their expectations around the labour market and skills training requirements.

The findings of much of this research are encouraging. High school graduation rates and post-secondary attendance rates are increasing in these neighbourhoods— particularly over the past decade. Schools are emphasizing re-engagement, multiple re-entry points, and creative strategies that are having a local impact. However, there remains much work to be done. This consultation found evidence of barriers to education and training that continue to exist and limit participation. This limited participation in combination with the increasing skill requirements of the local economy needs to be addressed in order to enable strong, vibrant neighbourhoods.

The concept of neighbourhood-based Learning Annex appears to be one part of the longer-term solutions to address these barriers. There was strong support among key informants and neighbourhood residents, as well as the literature review, for moving forward on the development of a Learning Annex. As conceived in the report, and set out in the recommendations, the Learning Annex will be developed with a mobile capacity to offer creative, innovative programming to engage neighbourhood residents, offer navigation help to residents hoping to take part in training and education programs, build on and strengthen links with local employers, and reduce barriers and create incentives to increase participation.

One of the strongest themes that came from the research was the importance of partnerships. As this project moves into its next phases, the partnerships that are already apparent between the Neighbourhood Planning Teams, the Steering Committee, and the strong network of service providers and educators will continue. One of the strongest themes that came from the research was the importance of partnerships. As this project moves into its next phases, the partnerships that are already apparent between the Neighbourhood Planning Teams, the Steering Committee, and the strong network of service providers and educators will continue to be strengthened. The development of an inter-disciplinary, neighbourhood-based Learning Annex is an exciting prospect that will provide greater linkages to the increased education, training, and employment opportunities that the Keith, Jamesville, and Beasley neighbourhoods are seeking.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Labour Market Action Partnership

Steering Committee Members

Jim Vanderveken (Co-Chair)
Suzanne Brown (Co-Chair)
Brandon Braithwaite
Charters
Angela Eckhart
Sandra Kelly
Bryan Ledgerwood
Lily Lumsden
Colleen McPhee
Jeff Moore
Laura Ryan
Norm Schleeahn
Judy Travis
Samara Young

Mohawk College
City of Hamilton Neighbourhood Action Strategy
Community Development Worker, Beasley, Jamesville Sharon
Hamilton Community Foundation
Employment Hamilton
City of Hamilton, Ontario Works
Pathways to Education
YMCA, Employment Services
Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
Community Development Worker, Keith
City of Hamilton, Economic Development
Workforce Planning Hamilton
Mohawk College, Access Program

Appendix B

Key Informants

Patrick Smith, Ted Hodgkinson	Eva Rothwell Community Centre
Johane Adair	City of Hamilton, Ontario Works
Kathy Allan-Fleet	North Hamilton Community Health Centre
Todd Bender	CityKidz
Duane Dahl	Boys and Girls Club
Kevin McPhee, Re-engagement	Teacher - Wilma's Place (HWCDSB)
Angela Eckhart	Employment Hamilton
Leah Morris, Sara Gill	Adult Basic Education Association
Lily Lumsden, Arsim Aliu	YMCA
Irene Heffernan	City of Hamilton, Ontario Works
Don Pente	Principal, Sir John A. McDonald Secondary School
Tim Keating	Turning Point (HWDSB)
Ahmed Mohammed	CityHousing Hamilton
Ines Rios	Immigrant Women's Centre
Jennie Anderson	McMaster U. Aboriginal Recruitment & Retention
Lisa Wang	Chinese Community Leader
Shamso Elsi	Somali Community Leader
Sharron Ciannuvie	Principal - Hess Street School (HWDSB)
Tom MacDonald	Teacher - Notre Dame School (HWCDSB)
Evelyn Myrie	Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion
Christina Martin, Amber Aquin	YMCA
David Carter	Innovation Factory
Todd Clyde	CCG Solutions

Appendix C

Key Informant Questionnaire

1. What are primary challenges you are seeing in terms of (as applicable to the KI):
 - a. High school completion OR
 - b. Post-sec/skills training OR
 - c. Unemployment/Underemployment OR
 - d. other barriers to employment – e.g. mental health, addictions

Prompt: How are people accessing technology? (Internet at home, Internet at public places, phones, other?)

2. What is working in these areas to improve these outcomes?

What are the successes you've witnessed in terms of students completing high school and young adults finding jobs?

3. Are there strategies that could be working but haven't been tried or haven't been scaled appropriately?

Are these best practices from elsewhere OR local programs that are not being accessed. If so, why are programs not being accessed?

4. Are there programs or initiatives that have been tried that have not worked?

5. One of the ideas this project is looking at is creating a Neighbourhood Learning Annex to help address some of these challenges [Describe]

- What do you think about this idea in general?
- Are there specific things you think this would have to offer that might make this successful?
- Are you familiar with similar ideas in other places?
- What would bring people in?
- This is not intended to duplicate, but enhance – what would make that work?

6. Any other comments or thoughts?

Appendix D

Neighbourhood Residents Consultation Questionnaire

1. Explain project.
2. Barriers to high school completion or post-secondary attendance.

Have there been times you thought about completing high school or attending post-secondary school (college) or getting skills training?

☐ Yes ☐ No

How do you think your "job scene" might change with high school or post-secondary education? (Is there value in pursuing it?)

What were the biggest two or three challenges you faced in either finishing high school OR

- ☐ Transportation ☐ Had to work (financial) ☐ Child care
☐ Health issue ☐ Didn't want to (why) ☐ Family expectations
☐ Didn't like school ☐ English Language ☐ French language
☐ Other _____

Attending post-secondary/more skills training

- ☐ Transportation ☐ Had to work for income ☐ Child care
☐ Health issue ☐ Didn't want to (why) ☐ Family expectations
☐ Didn't like school ☐ English Language ☐ Didn't know about it
☐ Financial Aid/Didn't have enough \$\$ ☐ Admission requirements
☐ Other _____

3. If you could design a solution that would have helped you graduate from high school or attend post secondary/skills training, what would it look like?

4. Do you access the Internet now? If so, how?

- ☐ Internet at home with computer ☐ Library ☐ Smartphone
☐ Don't use the internet ☐ Other

5. Have you gone to organizations or agencies that have been especially helpful in the area of high school completion, skills training, or employment help?

If so, what made it helpful?

How do you find out about organizations that might be able to help with employment or schooling issues?

☐ Planning Team ☐ Word of mouth ☐ Internet ☐ Phone book

☐ Media/Advertisements ☐ Other: _____

6. One of the ideas this project is looking at a Learning Annex to help address some of these challenges. [Describe]

What do you think of this idea in general?

Are there specific thing you would want in such a place? (List)

What would make you want to be part of it?

☐ Interesting Presentations ☐ Financial Aid info ☐ Computer Access

☐ Activities for Children ☐ English Language Learning Services

☐ Not far away ☐ Other _____

What might get in the way of you from using it?

☐ Far away ☐ Need Child care ☐ Friends don't go ☐ Transportation

☐ Don't like going to new places? ☐ Other _____

Appendix E

Employer Phone Interview Questions

1. Review context. Are you familiar with Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy? This current project focuses on improving employment outcomes for Keith, Jamesville, and Beasley.
2. Can you describe where you look for or recruit employees? Do you find recruitment challenging?
3. What kind of educational requirements do you have in your organization? Are there other skills you look for in applicants?
4. If you were to give advice to residents from those neighbourhoods on how to link into jobs at either your business, or others in the area, what would that advice be?
5. One of the ideas we are considering is developing a Learning Annex with Mohawk College. [Describe] This could be a place where there are opportunities for education, skills training, and hopefully links with employers.
 - a. Does this concept make sense to you? Is this something your business would want to be connected to?
 - b. Would there be ways to connect your business in to a Learning Annex model?
 - c. What concerns would you have?

Note: Some employer information was gathered from Workforce Planning Hamilton's Hire Learning Survey. Additional information on this survey can be found on the WPH website: <http://www.workforceplanninghamilton.ca/hire-learning>.

