

## **PLAR with YAR (Young Adults at Risk)**

The Learning and Literacy Directorate of Human Resource and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) funded a three year project to develop and evaluate tools and processes for young adults at risk. Jane McLaren presented her work at the CAPLA conference in October, 2008. Here is a summary of what was presented:

Youth at risk were identified as youth, between the ages of 18-29 years, who had disengaged from community, education or employment.

1. Unique to this project:
  - Clients were not typical PLAR clients. They lacked motivation normally seen by a learner in a PLAR process because they had a history of difficult life challenges;
  - A tool had not been developed for this target population;
  - Practitioners had a limited view of how PLAR could impact this population;
  - There was a need for a PLAR tool with fast results;
  - Unlike a normal PLAR process, there was a need for the practitioner and not the learner to identify opportunities and skills, and to build the portfolio;
  - Validation of skills by a person in authority was important to the process;
  - The tool could include no testing;
  - The tool had to be designed based on the reality of the life of youth at risk.

The project ended up focusing on one very simple question: **Who are you?**

### **Program Features**

1. **PrePLAR:**
  - a. **Group session (three to twelve participants in a 1 ½-2 hour session)**
    - The concept of PLAR is explained;
    - The PLAR process is explained;
    - The session includes interactive activities to discover positive learning experiences; and,

- Transferable skills are explained and clients have an opportunity to start to explore their own transferable skills.

**NOTE:** Most clients had experienced significant life challenges, therefore, the PrePLAR session helped to redirect the *Who are You Interview* from a focus on life challenges, to a focus on the skills that resulted from life challenges. This was easy to accomplish by referencing the content of the PrePLAR session.

## **2. *Who are You Interview:***

### **a. One on one session between practitioner and client (takes about 1 ½ hours for a skilled practitioner)**

- Includes a life review; and,
- Questions are divided by school age to prompt recollection of life events. (**NOTE:** A questionnaire template is provided – see link to tools below).

#### **Objectives:**

- To discover essential and transferable skills the candidate has learned through life;
- To determine the candidate's work values;
- To discover career groupings that may be of interest for future work for the candidate;
- To create a resume prototype the candidate may use;
- To identify skills that have been learned and skills that need to be learned; and
- To create a portfolio builder for the candidate's future use.

## **3. Portfolio Builder:**

### **a. Practitioner builds portfolio (1-1 ½ hours for a skilled practitioner)**

### **b. Practitioner presents portfolio to client (½ hour)**

- Product assists client to seek learning and/or attachment to the labour market in a focused way, based on identified knowledge, skills and abilities.

#### **Objectives:**

- To create a Portfolio Builder for the participant's future use and reference; and
- To identify Next Steps the participant may take in pursuing his/her career and/or educational goals.

### **Project Piloting**

The tools were piloted in nine sites across Canada. Following the pilots, some minor revisions to the tools were completed.

### **Client Outcomes**

Clients who participated in this process became more independent in their ability to take on steps toward life goals, because the process helped them to believe in themselves. Clients were able to realistically identify their shortcomings and determine areas to focus their next steps.

### **Practitioner Outcomes**

Some counselors who piloted the tools discovered that this process was *more* effective (in terms of time invested and outcomes) than an Essential Skills training program that was also offered to the same audience.

### **Link to Tools**

The project tools including a detailed implementation manual is available at:  
[http://www.uclc.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=38&Itemid=18](http://www.uclc.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=38&Itemid=18)

### **Link to Background Report**

The background report on which this work was based, is available here:  
<http://www.uclc.ca/images/plar/itreallygetsyouthinking.pdf>